

*The*

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# Internationalist



**Founding of the  
League for the Fourth International**

***Reforge the  
Fourth International!***



Leon Trotsky in Coyoacán, Mexico, 1939.

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ICL vs. Trotsky on the Crisis of Leadership

**In Defense of the Transitional Program . . . . . 10**

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Front page photo: Leon Trotsky in Coyoacán, Mexico, 1939.

Subscription blank graphic based on a poster by V.A. Rodchenko, *Books* (1925)

## Special Issue of *The Internationalist*

This special issue of *The Internationalist* focuses on the foundation of the League for the Fourth International and the political background to this important step in the struggle to reforge the world party of socialist revolution. The turbulent "post-Soviet period"—characterized by an economic and ideological offensive of the capitalist ruling classes, and sharp battles by the workers and oppressed in many countries—has disoriented and demoralized virtually the entire spectrum of left organizations internationally.

The impact has not spared the tendency which for three decades fought to uphold the revolutionary program of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky: the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). Reacting to the historic defeat represented by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, the ICL has drawn defeatist conclusions regarding the viability of communist intervention in the class struggle today.

In 1996 this led to the expulsion of leading cadres, who then formed the Internationalist Group (IG), and the desertion by the ICL leadership from an important class battle led by the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB) to throw cops out of the unions. Generalizing its centrist course, the ICL is now revising one fundamental Trotskyist position after another, on the popular front, the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy, permanent revolution and the central thesis of the founding program of Trotsky's Fourth International, that the crisis of humanity is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership.

Recently, the ICL expelled the Permanent Revolution Faction (PRF) in France which waged a fight within the ICL against this growing revisionism. Upon its expulsion the PRF issued a statement declaring, "Communism Lives, in the Trotskyist Program and the Struggles of the Workers and Oppressed!"

Articles in this issue trace the political crisis that has intensified in the ICL, including key documents of the PRF. In early April, these comrades (now the Groupe Internationaliste) fused with the IG in the U.S. and Mexico and the LQB in Brazil to form the League for the Fourth International. Drawing key lessons from past struggles and fighting to bring the program of revolutionary Marxism into the class battles of today, the materials presented here are crucial reading for proletarian revolutionaries today. The League for the Fourth International dedicates its efforts to the fight for world socialist revolution to put an end to the capitalist system of exploitation, racism and war. Join us!

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- Founding Statement of the Internationalist Group
- Declaration of the League for the Fourth International
- Articles from *The Internationalist*
- Articles from *Vanguarda Operária*
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- Marxist readings

## *The Internationalist*

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The following declaration, founding the League for the Fourth International, was adopted on 6 April 1998 by the Internationalist Group (U.S. and Mexico), the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil and the Groupe Internationaliste (formerly the Permanent Revolution Faction), in France.

In 1848, at the outbreak of revolution in France, Germany and much of the Old Continent, the *Communist Manifesto* proclaimed: "A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism." Seventy years later, amidst the carnage of the first imperialist world war, the Bolsheviks under V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky led a workers insurrection that took power in Russia. The workers soviets (councils) proclaimed the goal of "the establishment of a socialist organization of society and the victory of socialism in all countries." Faced with the invasion of 14 imperialist armies, the Soviet power triumphed in the ensuing Civil War under the Red Army, organized by Leon Trotsky. The battle cry "Workers of All Countries, Unite!" was expressed in the formation of the Communist International. For workers in the capitalist West, for colonial slaves of imperialism, Red October showed the way to their own liberation.

But the defeat of the wave of post-World War I revolutionary struggles in Europe, along with the isolation and poverty of the Soviet workers state, led to the rise of a conservative nationalist bureaucracy under Stalin, which usurped political power in 1923-24. Under the anti-Marxist watchword of building "socialism in one country," this privileged layer sought a *modus vivendi* with imperialism. This meant sabotaging revolutions abroad in the name of a "popular front" with the bourgeoisie, while crushing workers democracy in the Soviet Union, murdering the authentic communists of the Left Opposition and the entire remaining Bolshevik leadership of 1917. As Leon Trotsky insisted, defense of the gains of October required proletarian political revolution to oust the parasitic bureaucracy, together with socialist revolution in the capitalist West. Otherwise, the Stalinists' betrayals would prepare the way for capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union itself.

Seven decades of relentless imperialist pressure and the inner contradictions of the brittle Stalinist regimes finally took their toll. During 1989-92, a wave of counterrevolution destroyed the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state and the East European deformed workers states, restoring capitalist rule throughout the region. The imperialist bourgeoisie triumphantly proclaimed that this historic defeat for the world working class meant the "death of communism." U.S. imperialism declared a

## Declaration of the League for the Fourth International

## Reforge the Fourth International!

"New World Order," slaughtering more than 100,000 Iraqis in the Persian Gulf War. But the bourgeois triumphalism was short-lived. The capitalists' drive to slash wages and social programs deemed unnecessary now that the "red menace" was gone was met with outbreaks of working-class resistance in France, Italy, South Korea and elsewhere. Peasant struggles broke out in Mexico and Brazil. In a series of countries, popular front regimes have been installed to impose brutal austerity where conservative governments have failed.

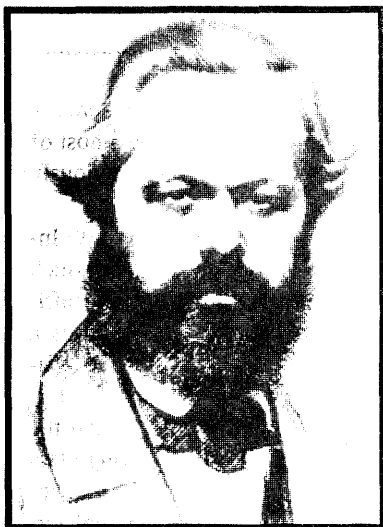
Yet even after proclaiming communism dead, the bourgeoisie is still haunted by its spectre. Today, 150 years after the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*, a propaganda blitz has been launched in France with a *Black Book of Communism*, monstrosity seeking to blame Lenin's Bolsheviks for more deaths than Hitler's Nazis. Their purpose is to criminalize the struggle for socialist revolution.

But they will not succeed. What is dead is Stalinism, the very antithesis of Leninist internationalism, while capitalism keeps producing potential communists around the world with the brutality of its exploitation and oppression. What is required is the intervention of the revolutionary party of the international proletariat. The central task is to build that party.

Today we announce the formation of the League for the Fourth International, through the fusion of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, the Internationalist Group in the United States and Mexico, and the Permanent Revolution Faction in France. As the PRF stated in its public declaration of 3 February 1998: "*Communism Lives, In the Struggles of the Workers and Oppressed and in the Trotskyist Program—Reforge the Fourth International!*" The task of the League for the Fourth International is to cohere the nucleus for reforging the world party of socialist revolution on the communist program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Historical experience over the last century has driven home the lesson that the question of revolutionary leadership is key to victory and defeat for the workers and oppressed. In August 1914, the main parties of the Second International, corroded by parliamentarism and the labor aristocracy, lined up behind "their own" bourgeoisies in World War I. The Social Democrats' support for capitalism meant strangling the German Revolution of 1918-19, ordering the murder of Communist leaders Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, and joining the imperialists' anti-Bolshevik crusade.

As the social democracy acted as bloodhounds for capitalism, workers throughout Europe were drawn around the banners



Karl Marx



Friedrich Engels

of the Third International. In one country after another, workers sought to carry out revolution, but were unable to win victory in the absence of tested communist parties. In its first four congresses (1919-1922), the Communist International under Lenin and Trotsky codified the lessons of the Russian Revolution and international workers struggles in the imperialist epoch, leaving an indispensable legacy for revolutionaries which we stand on today. But the growing bureaucratization of the Soviet state had devastating effects on the International.

In struggling against Stalin's policy of subordinating the Chinese proletariat to the bourgeois nationalists, which led to the bloody defeat of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, Trotsky generalized the theory and program of permanent revolution. Originally developed on the eve of the 1905 Revolution in Russia, and confirmed by the October Revolution of 1917, this holds that in countries of belated capitalist development, the unresolved tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution can be fulfilled only under the dictatorship of the proletariat, supported by the peasantry, through the socialist revolution which must be extended to the centers of world capitalism.

After ten years of struggle against the degeneration of the Comintern, Leon Trotsky and the expelled Left Opposition declared the need for a new revolutionary International after the Stalinists and Social Democrats allowed Hitler to march into power in 1933. In the face of this historic catastrophe, two years later the Stalinized Comintern definitively went over to reformism, openly embracing the bourgeoisie in the form of the "People's Front." In the guise of fighting fascism, it defended the interests of finance capital.

When the proletariat rose in revolutionary struggle in Spain and mass strikes in France, Stalinists and social democrats joined hands to strangle them with the noose of the popular front, opening the road to bloody right-wing dictatorships. Through such class-collaborationist alliances, the Stalinists sabotaged revolutionary opportunities in India, Italy, Greece and France during and after World War II. Over the following decades, the popular front brought terrible defeats for the workers and oppressed: in Brazil in 1964, Indonesia in 1965, Chile

in 1973 and elsewhere.

In response to the passing of the Comintern into the camp of the bourgeoisie, the authentic Bolshevik-Leninists, led by Trotsky, founded the Fourth International in 1938. The founding program of the Fourth International (the Transitional Program) stated: " 'People's Fronts' on the one hand—fascism on the other; these are the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution."

As the second imperialist world war approached, the Fourth International stood at its post, fighting for unconditional defense of the USSR against imperialist attack and for the revolutionary overthrow by the proletariat of the Stalinist bureaucracy that was a mortal danger to the workers state. The Trotskyists defended the remaining gains of October as part of their

fight for world socialist revolution, saying "those who are incapable of defending conquests already gained can never fight for new ones."

Following World War II, in which the Trotskyists' ranks and leadership in Europe were decimated by Nazi and Stalinist repression, many supporters of the Fourth International were affected by the growth of the Stalinist parties and disoriented by the appearance of bureaucratically deformed workers states in East Europe and China. As the anti-Soviet Cold War escalated, a revisionist current appeared as FI secretary Michel Pablo argued that Stalinism, under pressure from imperialism, could approximate revolutionary policies. Pabloist liquidationism, which denied the need for a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard, led to the destruction of the Fourth International in 1951-53.

The fight against revisionism has been a constant in the Marxist movement, as the pressures of bourgeois society weigh on the vanguard. Despairing of the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat, the Pabloists initially chased after Tito and the European CPs in the late 1940s and '50s. Under Ernest Mandel, these opportunists who falsely claimed to be Trotskyists constantly shifted their enthusiasms, from Castro and Mao in the '60s to the Sandinistas, Polish Solidarność and Cold War Social Democracy in the '80s. Due to the ravages caused by Pabloism, Trotskyists today must fight to *reforge the Fourth International* as a Leninist, democratic-centralist world party of socialist revolution.

The League for the Fourth International stands with Trotsky and James P. Cannon, the founder of U.S. Trotskyism, in the fight against the petty-bourgeois opposition led by Shachtman which abandoned unconditional military defense of the USSR in 1939-40; and with the fight against Pabloist revisionism that was waged (albeit belatedly and partially) in the 1950s. As Cannon said in the fight against Pabloism in 1953:

"If our break with Pabloism—as we see it now clearly—if it boils down to one point and is concentrated in one point, that is it: the question of the party.... The essence of Pabloist revisionism is the overthrow of that part of Trotskyism which is today its most vital part—the conception of the crisis of



mankind as the crisis of the leadership of the labor movement summed up in the question of the party."

—"Factional Struggle and Party Leadership" (November 1953)

A revolutionary party must be built in the best tradition of Cannonism, which was continued by the Revolutionary Tendency of the SWP in the 1960s, as it opposed the SWP's embrace of Castroism, the existing liberal and nationalist black leadership, and the SWP's reunification with Pablo/Mandel. The RT extended Marxism with its analysis of the Cuban deformed workers state. The RT, and then the Spartacist League and international Spartacist tendency, which in 1989 became the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), represented the political continuity of authentic Trotskyism. Of key importance in the U.S. is the perspective of revolutionary integrationism—for black liberation through socialist revolution—put forward by Richard Fraser and further developed by the Spartacist tendency. This methodology is also crucial in Brazil.

The Spartacist tendency uniquely fought for proletarian opposition against all forms of class-collaborationist popular fronts. This brought it into sharp conflict with the centrists who "peddle their wares in the shadow of the Popular Front" (as Trotsky put it in the '30s), from Sri Lanka to Chile, France and Portugal in the '70s, as well as in the Vietnam "anti-war" movement in the U.S., and in El Salvador and Mexico in the '80s and '90s.

As the second Cold War heated up, the iSt proclaimed "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" as the centrists joined the anti-Soviet "human rights" crusade, the ideological cover for imperialist financing of armies of Islamic reactionaries along the southern border of the USSR. When pseudo-Trotskyists proclaimed their "solidarity with Solidarity" (and thus with the anti-Communist reactionaries Reagan, Thatcher and Wojtyla), the Spartacists declared: "Stop Solidarność Counterrevolution!" As the Stalinist regimes crumbled, the ICL stood at its post, fighting for proletarian political revolution in defending the bureaucratically degenerated/deformed workers states against capitalist restoration. This included mobilizing all its resources to intervene with the Trotskyist program in East Germany (DDR), and its work in the Soviet Union.

Yet a process of centrist degeneration has taken place in the International Communist League in the period since the East European counterrevolutions of 1989-92. Drawing defeatist conclusions from this world-historic defeat for the international proletariat, the ICL has increasingly adopted an abstentionist policy of withdrawal from the class struggle. This led to a *betrayal* in Brazil in 1996. Seeking to justify such opportunism, the ICL has resorted to a series of revisions of fundamental elements of the Trotskyist program. The three organizations that have joined together in forming the League for the Fourth International have a common experience in fighting against this process of degeneration of the ICL.

In its founding statement (August 1996), the Internationalist Group declared, "The central thesis of the 1938 Transitional program of the FI fully retains its validity today: 'The

historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.... The crisis of the proletarian leadership, having become the crisis in mankind's culture, can be resolved only by the Fourth International'." This fundamental conception was opposed by Pablo and is today rejected by a host of pseudo-Trotskyists, including the ICL, which had previously led the fight for authentic Trotskyism against Pabloism.

Today, the ICL considers the statement of the Fourth International which the IG upheld as fully valid today (and which was repeatedly endorsed by the ICL in the past) to be "insufficient" and thus no longer valid, because of what it terms a "qualitative," "deep" or "historical retrogression in the political consciousness of the workers movement and the left internationally." The meaning of this revisionist thesis is that the crisis is no longer of the leadership but of the working class itself. As Trotsky emphasized in "The Lessons of October" (1924): "All shades of opportunism are, in the last analysis, reducible to an incorrect evaluation of the revolutionary forces and potential of the proletariat."

The Internationalist Group/Grupo Internacionalista was formed by longtime leading cadres of the International Communist League from the Spartacist League/U.S. and the Grupo Espartaquista de México. They had been purged a few months earlier as the ICL prepared to break relations with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil and to flee from a key class battle for the independence of the workers movement from the bourgeois state. In October 1996, young comrades were expelled from the GEM after denouncing the earlier expulsions and the ICL leadership's betrayal in Brazil.

The ICL leadership's desertion from the fight to oust the cops from the unions in Brazil, which it had earlier encouraged, was a sharp turn to the right for the organization which for more than three decades represented the continuity of revolutionary Trotskyism. The International Group's founding statement declared:

"The present leadership of the ICL has shown...that it is incapable of pursuing a coherent revolutionary policy, much less leading a proletarian revolution...."

"The IG fights to cohere the nucleus of the revolutionary party which must be built as the leadership of the working class. This must be a party of professional revolutionaries, as defined by Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?* which seeks to fuse together the most advanced elements of the working class with declassed intellectuals...."

"The IG must combine theoretical struggle to defend and extend the Marxist program with fighting to provide leadership commensurate with its real capacities, seeking to 'help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution' (Transitional Program)."

—*The Internationalist* No. 1, January-February 1997

The Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil was founded in April 1996 by the Luta Metalúrgica group. LM was formed in the late 1980s by militants who had played a leading role in the convulsive mass illegal steel workers strikes against the Brazilian military dictatorship. Purged by the reformist Lula leadership of the Workers Party (PT) because of their opposition to the Frente

Guy Le Querrec/Magnum



**Workers at Renault Billancourt auto plant greet students in May 1968.**

Brasil Popular, they were recruited to the centrist Causa Operária group, believing that C.O. represented a Trotskyist opposition to the popular front. Inside C.O., LM opposed the leadership's refusal to fight against the oppression of blacks and women.

In 1994, LM broke with Causa Operária over C.O.'s call to vote for Lula, the presidential candidate of the Frente Brasil Popular, and pursued discussions with the ICL. This led to the establishment of fraternal relations on the basis of key programmatic points, including proletarian opposition to voting for any candidate of any popular front; upholding the Trotskyist program on the deformed and degenerated workers states; that the Leninist vanguard party of the proletariat must be a "tribune of the people," mobilizing the working class against the oppression of blacks and women, which is a strategic part of the program of permanent revolution in Brazil; and the struggle to reforge the Fourth International. A 1994 LM pamphlet, "For a Revolutionary Regroupment," declared:

"The working class can be united in revolutionary struggle only if there is an active fight against special oppression and against the bourgeois prejudices that divide the workers and poison their consciousness. The working class (whites, blacks, mulattoes, of all ethnic groups) must be mobilized in action against the massacres of street children and the assassination of activists, for workers self-defense, against the oppression of homosexuals and the massacre of Indians."

In the course of the sharp struggle it waged in 1996 over the central question of the state, Luta Metalúrgica changed its name to the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil. The article presenting the first issue of the LQB's newspaper, *Vanguarda Operária*, began: "Referring to the tasks of the proletarian revolution Trotsky wrote, 'For a successful solution of all these tasks, three conditions are required: a party; once more a party; again a

party!'" The LQB has carried out a series of steps in its transformation into the nucleus of such a party, including publication of a paper, extension to a major metropolitan center and undertaking recruitment of youth.

In response to the campaign to remove cops from the Municipal Workers Union of the steel city of Volta Redonda, the police, courts and Popular Front city government launched heavy attacks on the LQB. This was an important test. While the ICL fled from the battle, alleging "unacceptable risks to the vanguard," the LQB courageously stood and fought. As the workers voted the ouster of the cops, the courts were brought in to install pro-police puppets against the union ranks.

The repression against the Trotskyist workers in Brazil continues as the courts have sought to suppress their propaganda—ordering the "search and seizure" of a leaflet by the Class-

Struggle Caucus (CLC), initiated by the LQB—and launched criminal prosecution against them. For over a year and a half, the ICL leadership has waged a campaign of smears and slanders against the LQB and IG, picking up and broadcasting one lie after another from the spokesmen for the steel bosses, pro-cop provocateurs and the popular front, who have instigated the state persecution of the Brazilian Trotskyists. The IG/LQB have refuted every one of these lying distortions and outright fabrications with documented proof. At the same time, we have pointed to the abstentionist political line and centrist course that are behind the ICL leaders' recourse to bureaucratic methods of lies and expulsions.

Inside the ICL, the zigzag path followed by the International Secretariat (I.S.) has produced a wide-ranging crisis in the organization. A number of leaders of national sections have quit in demoralization while the ICL leadership has characterized most of its sections as centrist or afflicted by centrism. Yet some did not acquiesce in the destructive course of the leadership. Seeing how the I.S. has falsified its own actions and history in fights over Germany, Mexico and Brazil, and as a result of their own experience with this increasingly erratic leadership, leading comrades in the Ligue Trotskyiste de France launched an opposition against the centrist policies of the I.S.

After fighting against the abandonment by the ICL leadership of the "Iskra" perspective of cohering a Trotskyist nucleus in exile from North African militants, and against the I.S.'s refusal to put out propaganda with a transitional program for struggle in the truckers strike, the first major struggle faced by the popular-front government in France, in mid-December 1997, these comrades declared the Permanent Revolution Faction. The PRF "Declaration of Faction" dissected the crisis of the ICL, analyz-

"Declaration of Faction" dissected the crisis of the ICL, analyzing its origins and stating political solidarity with the IG.

In this and other documents, the PRF refuted the ICL's claim that the Stalinists had led the capitalist annexation of the East German deformed workers state (and not the imperialist bourgeoisie along with its Social Democratic labor lieutenants, as the ICL said at the time); the ICL's sudden revelation (contradicting its policy for the last decade) that there was supposedly no Cárdenas popular front in Mexico, at the very moment Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas was being elected governor of Mexico City; and the ICL's insistence that for permanent revolution to apply there had to be "feudal remnants" in Mexico and Latin America. The PRF pointed out that over Brazil and North Africa, the ICL was abandoning the struggle to forge communist nuclei in the semi-colonial countries—a denial of the permanent revolution and a classic symptom of centrist degeneration in the direction of left social democracy.

The ICL leadership answered with vile attempts at intimidation and chauvinist baits, while refusing to respond to the political arguments of the minority—except for one. The ICL's year-long attempt to accuse the IG of abandoning permanent revolution so blatantly falsified Trotsky's position that the leadership had to abandon its claim (borrowed from the Stalinists) that "semi-feudal" social conditions prevailed in the Latin American countryside. In order to shore up its own membership, the ICL escalated its dirty smear campaign against the Brazilian comrades to the point of seeking to sabotage international defense efforts as these largely black Trotskyist workers face renewed state repression.

When all this failed to have the desired effect, the Permanent Revolution Faction was summarily expelled just days before the third international conference of the ICL. As the ICL leadership sought to ensure internal tranquility by purging the revolutionaries and walling itself off from the class struggle, the PRF issued a defiant statement (*"Communism Lives,"* 3 February 1998) declaring:

"It is through this struggle for the revolutionary program that communists bring to the most advanced elements of the working class and oppressed the consciousness of their historic tasks, to forge a Trotskyist party tested in battle, and not through passive 'commentary' and abstract propaganda, which is more and more the refrain of the leadership of the ICL."

"Coming one after another, these revisions and 'correctives'—on permanent revolution, on the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy, on the popular front—could not hold together without giving them an elaborated revisionist foundation. Thus all the recent incantations in the ICL on the effects of this period supposedly marked by a 'historical retrogression in the political consciousness of the working class' went hand-in-hand with liquidating and putting into doubt the role of the party and revolutionary leadership."

A stunning fact in the degeneration of the International Communist League has been how, as it has gone from Trotskyism to left-centrism, it has begun to repeat many of the arguments long used by various centrist and even reformist pretenders to Trotskyism, some of the same arguments that the

ICL polemicized against in the past.

In constituting the League for the Fourth International, we reject the claims of all the opportunist groupings pretending to be the Fourth International, or to represent the continuity of Trotskyism, while they betray every point of the revolutionary Marxist and Leninist program Trotsky fought for.

The largest of these outfits is the United Secretariat (USec) of the late Ernest Mandel, which brought together the European Pabloists with the American SWP in 1963 on the program of supporting petty-bourgeois guerrillas in Cuba and Algeria. At every crucial juncture, the USec has fractured along its multiple fault lines. Typically having multiple groups in the same country, in Portugal in 1975-76 the USec's competing sections found themselves literally on the opposite sides of the barricades, one tailing left-talking military officers, the other tailing the CIA-funded social democrats.

Having been deeply ensconced in Cold War social democracy in the 1980s, the mask became the face as the USec's largest components are now social-democratic reformists. Carrying out the tailist politics of Pabloism to their liquidationist conclusion, the USec is preparing to liquidate itself. Its largest remaining section, the French LCR, is trying to remove both "communist" and "revolutionary" from its name, in a desperate drive to join the "plural majority" popular-front government of social democrat Jospin.

Several of the larger groupings claiming to be Trotskyist have adopted names suggesting a return to the International Workingmen's Association of 1864-1871 (the First International). This is the case of the "Liaison Committee for a Workers International" of Pierre Lambert's French PT (Workers Party); the "Committee for a Workers International," led by Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party in Britain (formerly the Militant Labour tendency); and the Latin America-based International Workers League of the followers of the late Nahuel Moreno. While assuming the appearance of an amorphous parody of the First International, they are really trying to "overcome the division of the workers movement" that resulted from the founding of the Third (Communist) International by returning to the politics of the social-democratic Second International.

These groups all have in common the view that with the collapse of the Soviet Stalinist regime, Trotskyism has been superseded. This is shared by the national-reformist Lutte Ouvrière group in France, which is usually identified in the press as Trotskyist although it makes no pretense of fighting for a Trotskyist International and its real politics are parliamentary cretinism overlaid with social-democratic workerism. The British Workers Power and its satellites grouped in the League for a Revolutionary Communist International have recently returned to their "state capitalist" roots: after a decade and a half of pretending to uphold the Trotskyist characterization of deformed workers states, WP has now declared that the bourgeois state was never replaced in East Europe.

Behind the profusion of names and the sometimes bizarre theoretical elaborations of these outfits, the stark fact is that all of them proclaimed "solidarity with Solidarity" in the 1980s, when Ronald Reagan and the anti-Communist pope in the

Vatican were financing and advising these counterrevolutionary Polish nationalists. Almost all of them supported Washington's man in the Russian White House, Boris Yeltsin, in his counterrevolutionary counter-coup in August 1991. Some of them, like Workers Power, even called on Margaret Thatcher's government of British imperialism to arm anti-Soviet fascistic nationalists in the Baltics. None of them fought against capitalist reunification of Germany in 1989-90.

Today, the United Secretariat pretends capitalism hasn't been restored in the Soviet Union and East Europe to hide the fact that they hailed Yeltsin. Workers Power pretends the capitalist state was never abolished in East Europe, to hide the fact that they sided with Solidarność. It is grotesque for any of these poseurs to make the slightest pretense of representing the politics of Trotsky, who wrote that in the face of counterrevolution, "Not the slightest taint of guilt must fall upon the revolutionary internationalists. In the hour of mortal danger, they must remain on the last barricade." These anti-communist fakers were on the first barricade of the *counterrevolution*.

Today the lessons of the struggle against counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe are crucial in the fight to defend the remaining deformed workers states (China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam) and for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies which are opening the way for and feeding the capitalists' drive for counterrevolution. In the face of the looming threat of capitalist restoration, the construction of Trotskyist parties is indispensable in order to mobilize the toilers, particularly the powerful Chinese proletariat, for this program and spread socialist revolution to the capitalist countries.

For many years, groups derived from the "International Committee" of Gerry Healy as well as a number of other tendencies claimed to be "reconstructing" the Fourth International. By

this they meant forming opportunist blocs with each other that fell apart at the first test in the class struggle, if not before. Following the implosion of Healy's fraudulent and anti-Soviet IC in 1985, amid revelations of lavish funding from Near Eastern bourgeois rulers, its various remnants have almost all disappeared. Cliff Slaughter's British WRP closed up shop in 1996, calling for a new socialist party that would be neither Marxist nor Leninist. David North's "Socialist Equality Party" has now stopped publishing its paper, and its views are now only propagated on the Internet, to those who have access to a computer.

There are a number of groups on the centrist carousel, most of whom have at one time or another been in an international tendency with each of the others. The Argentine Partido Obrero of Jorge Altamira is currently on a campaign for the "immediate refounding of the Fourth International" by a range of feuding opportunist groups. They are joined by the "International Trotskyist Opposition" (ITO), whose mainstay, the Italian Proposta group, is buried deep in Rifondazione Comunista. One of this centrist alliance's supposed criteria is opposition to popular fronts, yet all of its components (including PO and its Brazilian ally, Causa Operária) have voted for popular fronts for years. Meanwhile, they are appealing to the Morenoites, who in Brazil were a component of Lula's Frente Brasil Popular (which also includes the Mandelites and Lambertistes who are an organic part of the bureaucracy of the social-democratic PT).

Various smaller centrist groupings sometimes adopt more radical rhetoric, while their actual practice is distinctly rightist. Thus the national-centrists grouped around Guillermo Lora's Bolivian POR raise the slogan of "Proletarian Revolution and Dictatorship." Yet Lora's real policy is the Menshevik program of an "Anti-Imperialist United Front" with sections of the bourgeoisie, which led to the popular front with General Juan José

Torres that doomed workers resistance to the 1971 coup of General Banzer. An offshoot of the Altamira tendency, the "CBCI" (Bolshevik Current for the Fourth International) made up of the Argentine PBCI and the Brazilian LBI, are advisors to the pro-police clique used by the bourgeois state against the Trotskyist LQB in Volta Redonda. Now this lash-up seems to be splitting apart at the seams.

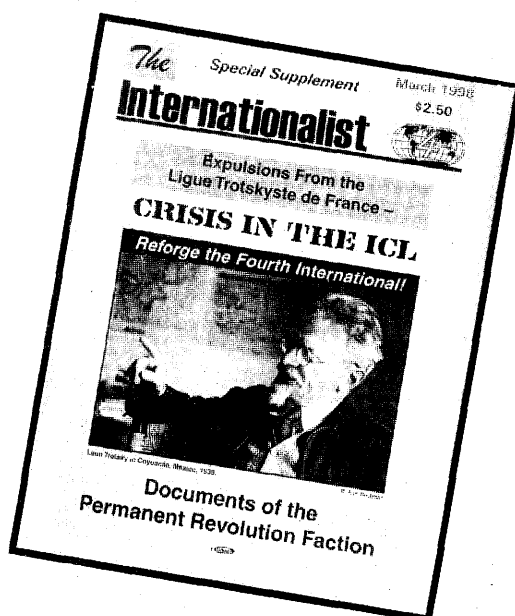
In the early 1980s, a layer of capitulators quit the Spartacist tendency unwilling to stand up to the anti-Soviet tide. A number of these came together in what adopted the singularly inappropriate name of the "Bolshevik Tendency." The latter-day Mensheviks of the BT quaked at the thought of saying "Hail Red Army" in Afghanistan or accepting responsibility for the consequences of calling to "Stop Solidarność

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**Unloading Bolshevik propaganda from Red Army propaganda train during Civil War.**

Counterrevolution" in Poland. From the beginning, the BT reflected the outlook of the labor bureaucracy, culminating in their defense of a BT spokesman's crossing picket lines. This is a violation of the most fundamental principles of labor solidarity.

Leon Trotsky's Fourth International fought for the program of the early Communist International, the young Soviet Republic and the October Revolution—the highest achievements of the revolutionary workers movement to date. Authentic Trotskyism has nothing to do with the ludicrous and sometimes sinister antics of the opportunist imposters. They are, one and all, continuators of the heritage of Pabloism, of searching for non-proletarian leaderships because of their own despair in the revolutionary capacity of the international working class. Unlike these frauds, the International Communist League was on the last barricades in the fight against counterrevolution. But after the defeat it has been infected with the defeatism that pervades this milieu. While its programmatic expression is still different from the open opportunists, they all liquidate the Leninist party as an active factor in the class struggle.

We fight to forge a Fourth International that Trotsky would have recognized as his own.

The League for the Fourth International is a tendency in formation. It will draw to its ranks those who seek to defend and extend the program of authentic Trotskyism, and to apply it in the struggle of the working class and the oppressed. The re-forging of the Fourth International requires defeating Pabloism and all other currents which betray the revolutionary Trotskyist program. An important component of this fight, and of the struggle to overcome the disparity between the tasks we face and our limited forces, will be the tactic of revolutionary regroupment on the program of Leninist internationalism. We foresee a series of splits from revisionist organizations and fusions with those genuinely seeking to be communists, in building the vanguard party.

As the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil wrote in its letter responding to the ICL's ignominious breaking of relations: we stand for the consistency of words and deeds. Despite our small numbers, our strength is to be found in the Marxist revolutionary tradition we fight for. The LFI stands on the heritage of the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels; on Lenin's fight to build the Bolshevik vanguard party and his synthesis of the Marxist position on the state in *The State and Revolution*, which provided the programmatic armament for the Russian October Revolution of 1917.

Our program is based on the legacy of the first four congresses of the Communist International, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, and of the fight of the Russian and International Left Opposition leading to the founding of the Fourth International in 1938 on the basis of the Transitional Program. We trace our origins to the Revolutionary Tendency of the SWP in the U.S., standing on its documents as well as the 1966 Declaration of Principles of the Spartacist League, the fundamental statements of the SL and international Spartacist tendency, and of the International Communist League through its second international conference in 1992 and the fight for Trotskyism against a nationalist/pro-Stalinist faction in the ICL in 1994.

The League for the Fourth International embraces the programmatic statement, "The Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil: Who We Are and What We Want" (*Vanguarda Operária* No. 1, July-September 1996) and the programmatic content of the 1994 "Declaration of Fraternal Relations" between LM and the ICL, which the latter has now repudiated; the document of the comrades expelled from the Spartacist League, "From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle" (July 1996); the founding statement of the Internationalist Group and the IG/LQB "Joint Statement of Commitment to Fight to Reforge the Fourth International" (*The Internationalist* No. 1, January-February 1997). We endorse as well the "Declaration of Faction" and other documents of the Permanent Revolution Faction.

As the PRF wrote in its 3 February 1998 statement upon its expulsion by the ICL:

"Despite the triumphalist cries of the world bourgeoisie about the so-called 'death of communism,' what is dead is Stalinism, that negation and nationalist perversion of communism—which is international in its essence. Communism lives—it lives in the uninterrupted class struggle of the working class and the oppressed; it lives in the program of Lenin, Trotsky and Cannon which the Spartacist tendency defended and which it has begun to abandon and renounce; it lives in the struggles and the program upheld by the IG, the LQB and the PRF and in the fusion of our organizations which will prepare the ground for the Trotskyist world party of socialist revolution. Forward to reforge the Fourth International!"

Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil

Groupe Internationaliste (France)

(ex-Fraction Révolution Permanente)

Internationalist Group/Grupo Internacionalista

(U.S./Mexico)

6 April 1998

# ICL vs. Trotsky on the Crisis of Leadership

## In Defense of the Transitional Program



The 1989-92 wave of counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet Union and the East European bureaucratically deformed workers states has led to a sharp political degeneration in the International Communist League (ICL), which for more than three decades led the fight for authentic Trotskyism. This has been expressed in a growing tendency to abstention from the class struggle, most dramatically the ICL's desertion from a key battle for the independence of the workers movement in Brazil in mid-1996. This tendency was also a key factor in the successive waves of expulsions of leading cadres and youth comrades who opposed the organization's new centrist line as it was taking shape. As it flees from the class struggle and "cleanses" its ranks of troublesome elements, while trying to cover its tracks under a welter of lies, the ICL leadership also flees from the Marxist program. In the course of polemicizing against the Internationalist Group, the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil and the Permanent Revolution Faction, the ICL leadership has revised a series of key Trotskyist positions:

- On the *popular front*, which Trotsky called "*the main question of proletarian class strategy* for this epoch," the ICL now argues that such class-collaborationist coalitions are impossible where there is no mass workers party, particularly in capitalist countries subjugated by imperialism where bourgeois nationalism holds sway. For almost a decade, from 1988 to 1997, the ICL had warned of the danger posed in Mexico by the popular front around opposition leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and his bourgeois-nationalist PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution). But just at the moment when Cárdenas was elected governor of the national capital, the ICL leadership suddenly declared last year that there was no popular front in Mexico. To justify this about-face, it directly contradicts Trotsky's writings about popular frontism in China, India and Mexico in the 1930s, as well as the ICL's past positions. Instead, seeking to justify its refusal to fight to break workers and oppressed from this class-collaborationist coalition, the ICL adopts arguments from the followers of the late Nahuel Moreno, who deny the existence of popular fronts in Latin America in order to support and even join them.

- On Trotsky's theory and perspective of *permanent revolution* in countries of belated capitalist development, the ICL claimed that for this program to apply there must be "feudal remnants" present. This was borrowed from the arsenal of the Stalinists who talked of "semi-feudal" conditions in China in the 1920s and Latin America in the '60s in order to justify tailing bourgeois nationalism. In its fight against the Permanent Revolution Faction, the ICL had to shamefacedly admit that this line was "inaccurate." Yet now the ICL argues that by denouncing the Cárdenas popular front in Mexico we supposedly deny the "multiform reality of capitalist oppression"! What they mean is that, while they may have gotten the term wrong, Mexico and similar countries are so backward, their workers so benighted by bourgeois nationalism and overshadowed by the peasantry, that socialist revolution can only be a distant perspective. And meanwhile the ICL cancels its previous "*Iskra* perspective" of publishing an exile organ aimed at winning Leninist cadres from among North African emigres. In short, from Brazil to North Africa it is abandoning the struggle to forge communist nuclei in the semi-colonial countries.

- The ICL is also revising the Trotskyist analysis of the Stalinist bureaucracy, another programmatic cornerstone of the Fourth International. Today it insists that the Stalinists not only undermined and betrayed the legacy and gains of the October Revolution, preparing the way for capitalist restoration, capitulating to and selling out the workers states to the bourgeoisie—as Trotskyists have always said—but that this petty-bourgeois

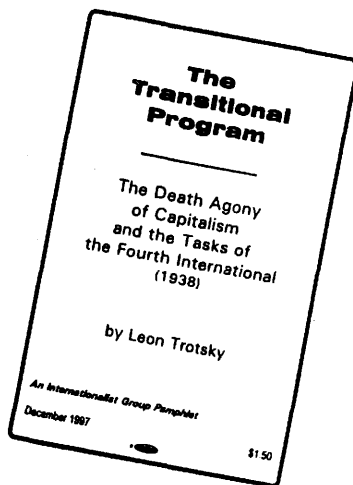
layer supposedly "led the counterrevolution in the ex-deformed workers states" (*Le Bolchévick*, Spring 1998). This is not only historically false—the imperialist bourgeoisie led the counterrevolution, spearheaded by its social-democratic labor lieutenants and direct imperialist agents from Yeltsin in Russia to Walesa in Poland—it contradicts Trotsky's analyses and the entire previous record of the ICL. Nowhere in the period from 1989 to 1992, as the counterrevolution was under way and the Spartacists went all out to combat it, did the ICL ever say that the Stalinists led the counterrevolution in East Europe. This was, however, the refrain of the various centrists who wanted to disguise their support to counterrevolution.

● Summing up its multiple revisions of central components of Trotskyism, the ICL has now revised and rejected the central thesis of the founding program of the Fourth International. The ICL's new Declaration of Principles states:

"Trotsky's assertion in the 1938 *Transitional Program* that 'The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of leadership of the proletariat' predates the present deep regression of proletarian consciousness. The reality of this post-Soviet period adds a new dimension to Trotsky's observation."

So in weaselly phrases about "predating" the present and adding a "new dimension," the ICL has declared *out of date* the *reason for the existence of the Fourth International*. It is no accident that virtually every revisionist current has objected to this same key concept. We have pointed to the growing *abstentionism* of the ICL leadership. This is not only a failure to intervene actively in various struggles. Here the ICL is trying to give a *theoretical justification* for an abstentionist *program*, claiming that the problem is no longer a crisis of leadership but of the proletariat itself.

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That this is not just a flawed or skewed formulation but a whole policy is shown by the origin of this phrase in the new principles of the new ICL. In a 2 October 1996 letter, the historical leader of the ICL Jim Robertson polemicized against the founding statement of the Internationalist Group, quoting the sentence, "The central thesis of the 1938 Transitional Program of the FI fully retains its validity today," and commenting: "To simply say 'fully retains its validity today' is insufficient." He continued:

"Today, the crisis is not limited to the crisis of revolutionary leadership of the working class. The working classes across the world are qualitatively politically more disoriented and organizationally more dispersed. Today, to put it roughly, we have been forced back before 1914 and without the mixed blessing of an assured, complacent, mass Social Democracy."

In other words, the crisis is now supposedly that of the *working class* itself, which is today allegedly too "disoriented" and "dispersed" to carry out its historic mission.

Over the past two years, there has been a mounting refrain in the ICL about a supposed "historical retrogression in the political consciousness of the workers movement and left internationally," as the October 1997 call for the ICL's third international conference states. In the recent fight in the ICL, the comrades of the Permanent Revolution Faction objected to this and to the rejection of Trotsky's thesis that "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership." The PRF wrote that the ICL's new line represents "a deeply idealist, and at the same time empiricist vision of history," saying that if Pabloism was Cold War impressionism, this is a sort of "New World Order" impressionism."

Indeed, Spartacist members have more than once referred to a "new world reality" since the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, seemingly unaware that this was Pablo's catchword in justifying his own earlier rejection of the same key concept of the Transitional Program. Pablo said in a speech to the French section leadership in 1952:

"We will discuss with our comrades...who will leave aside the Transitional Programme which was written in an entirely different period. What has happened during and since the war is colossal. New things have appeared. Marxist thinking that tries to take refuge behind the phrases of the Transitional Programme is unacceptable to the Trotskyists."

—quoted by S.T. Peng, "Pabloism Reviewed" (January 1955)

But the ICL does not stop there. The IG wrote in its founding statement: "The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union was a major defeat for the world proletariat. Yet the *defeatist* conclusions the ICL leadership has drawn from this are an echo of the bourgeoisie's 'death of communism' campaign." *Confirming* this charge, Jim Robertson in his October 1996 letter charged the IG with "insensitivity" to a "qualitative change which had occurred and which is part of a larger change which has been trumpeted around by the ruling classes as the 'death of communism'." This *accepts* the validity of the bourgeoisie's claim, only quibbling about the name they assign to it.

In contrast to this profoundly demoralized conclusion, the document of the ICL's second international conference (1992) noted that the "fatuous 'bourgeois-democratic' triumphalism"



had "largely dissipated" since 1989. Still, it wrote, "The 'death of communism' propaganda has had a deep impact on the left." Now it must be added: including on the ICL.

### Revisionist Parallels

It is striking how the ICL is now repeating, often word for word, the views of the Pabloist liquidators on a series of key questions. Thus, for example, Daniel Bensaïd, the principal theoretician of the United Secretariat (USec) today, writes in terms almost identical to those used by Jim Robertson of the ICL:

"The crisis of revolutionary leadership on the international scale can no longer be posed in the terms of the 1930s. It is not reduced to a crisis of the vanguard and the necessity to replace the bankrupt traditional leaderships by an intact relief team. What is on the order of the day is the social, trade-union and political reorganization of the workers movement and its allies on a planetary scale."

—from the preface to François Moreau, *Combats et débats de la IVe Internationale* (1993)

Furthermore, the ICL's 1997 Draft Declaration of Principles is "predated" by the 1992 Programmatic Manifesto of the United Secretariat, which states in almost identical terms:

"The crisis of humanity, in the last analysis, is the crisis of leadership and of the consciousness of the wage earners.... But the crisis of credibility of socialism which has prevailed for the last decade adds a new dimension to this crisis of leadership.... The skepticism of the masses concerning a global project of society that is different from 'social' capitalism tends to fragment movements of protest and revolt."

This is no mere conjunctural analysis. The ICL and USec are here putting forward a virtually identical view of the world today. Their conclusions are different: the leaders of the United Secretariat are preparing to abandon any reference to Trotskyism, declaring that the idea of a world party of socialist revolution is out of date, because the crisis of humanity is no longer that of the revolutionary leadership but rather a crisis of the working class itself. They have become thoroughly social-democratized, and their program is at best that of the Second International's old "minimum program."

The leaders of the International Communist League say that because of the supposed qualitative retrogression in workers' consciousness, "for the first time since the Paris Commune, the masses of workers in struggle do not identify their immediate felt needs with the ideals of socialism or the program of socialist revolution" (January 1996 memorandum of the ICL's International Executive Committee). They seek to "build the party" in isolation from intervention in workers struggles. They now seldom raise transitional demands, but simply repeat the "maximum program" of the Second International, the one that was reserved for Sunday speechifying. Thus the ICL is on the road to becoming left-centrist "maximalist" social democrats.

The programmatic conclusions are different from the USec, but they are two sides of the same coin: in the first case through untrammelled opportunism, in the second by increasing abstentionism and purely abstract propagandism, *both result in abandoning the struggle to forge a genuinely revolutionary leadership of the working class.*

The thesis that the delay of the world revolution is due to the lack of revolutionary consciousness of the working class is an old theme. Trotsky polemicized against this view in his unfinished 1940 essay, "The Class, the Party and the Leadership." His remarks were directed against a small French periodical, *Que faire* (What Is To Be Done), which blamed the crushing of the Spanish Revolution on the "immaturity of the working class." As Trotsky pointed out, this piece of sophistry, unloading the responsibility of the leaders on the masses, is the "classical trick of all traitors, deserters, and their attorneys."

This is also a common refrain among those seeking to justify the rejection of Trotskyism. Thus in the late 1940s, an article by Henry Judd on "The Relevance of Trotskyism" in Max Shachtman's *New International* (August 1949) stated:

"Perhaps the outstanding difference between the past of Trotsky and our present is the absence of this mass of human beings in whom socialist consciousness to one or another degree existed. In no nation of the world today does there exist a body of workers possessing a socialist consciousness in the traditional sense of this word."

The author's conclusion: "It's doubtful...that the concepts of classic Trotskyism can be of much assistance based as they are on the existence of a mass social consciousness forever expanding under the lash of experience and the teachings of the original party."

More recently, in the 1980s the right-centrist Workers Power group (which came out of the International Socialism tendency of Tony Cliff, who held the Soviet Union to be "state capitalist") declared that the Fourth International was not only organizationally destroyed, but that what was required was a "creative re-elaboration" of a new program for a new international in a new period. WP "theoretical" hot-shot Mark Hoskisson called for a "strategic retreat" in which, "In place of the *Transitional Programme's* general denunciation of reformism a programme of action utilising the tactics of the united front was required" ("The Transitional Programme Fifty Years On," *Permanent Revolution* No. 7, Spring 1988). The creatively re-elaborated WP program wrote off the program of the Fourth International as peculiar to the pre-World War II period:

"Trotsky's *Transitional Programme*, written in these years, pronounced that the crisis of humanity was reduced to the crisis of leadership. However, today it would be wrong simply to repeat that all contemporary crises are 'reduced to a crisis of leadership.'

"The proletariat worldwide does not yet face the stark alternative of either taking power or seeing the destruction of its past gains."

—League for a Revolutionary Communist International, *The Trotskyist Manifesto* (1989)

The ICL replied then to this anti-Trotskyist diatribe by the barely reconstructed Cliffites:

"Try telling that brazen lie to American unionists who have seen a massive onslaught against the unions, whose real wages have fallen steadily for the last two decades; tell it to ghetto black youth, an entire generation that capitalism has thrown on the scrap heap with no hope of ever getting jobs; tell it to British, French and West German workers who have suffered almost a decade of double-digit unemployment; tell it to the



working people of East Germany, fully half of whom (and even more among women) have been thrown out of work as a result of the counterrevolution of capitalist reunification; tell it to the immigrant workers, who are the target of racist terror and suffer the sharpest blows of capitalist austerity; tell it to the masses of East Europe, reduced to starvation wages and soup kitchens; tell it to the interpenetrated peoples of Yugoslavia being ripped apart in bloody nationalist war; tell it to the masses of the 'Third World,' including tens of millions of industrial workers producing for the imperialist markets, who are sinking ever deeper into immiseration! What profound confidence in capitalism Workers Power has."

—Jan Norden, "Yugoslavia, East Europe and the Fourth International: The Evolution of Pabloist Liquidationism," Appendix 2, *Prometheus Research Series* No. 4 (March 1993)

Yet today the ICL joins Workers Power in saying that it would be "insufficient" to say that the crisis of humanity is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership; it joins the United Secretariat in saying that a "new dimension" must be added.

But even if it is admitted that latter-day Pabloists, Shachtmanites and Cliffites all latch onto the thesis that "classic Trotskyism" is not relevant because of lack of socialist consciousness in the working class, could it nevertheless be true that there has been a qualitative "retrogression" in socialist consciousness? USec leader Bensaïd writes that "at the time of the Moscow trials, of the Spanish Civil War, and on the eve of the world war, the formula [of the Transitional Program on the crisis of revolutionary leadership] had an incontestable currency," but not now. The ICL says that "in no country today can we say, as Trotsky said about the workers of Spain in the 1930s, that the political level of the proletariat is above that of the Russian proletariat on the eve of the February Revolution" (*Le Bolchévique*, Spring 1998).

These parallel arguments distort the situation then and now. Trotsky wrote the Transitional Program as the Spanish Revolution was in the throes of defeat, and he emphasized that the Fourth International was born of "the greatest defeats of the proletariat in history." Did those defeats have an impact on workers' consciousness? Certainly. But Trotsky did not therefore throw up his hands and bemoan a "historical retrogression in the political consciousness of the workers movement and the left internationally." Instead, he emphasized that, "The orientation of the masses is determined first by the objective conditions of decaying capitalism, and second, by the treacherous politics of the old workers' organizations."

Moreover, to pretend that the world proletariat as a whole had a similar level of consciousness to that of Spanish workers at the start of the Civil War, or that Trotsky's thesis about the crisis of revolutionary leadership assumed such a level of consciousness, is sheer invention. What about American work-



Il Mondo

**Italian metal union leader Bruno Trentin pelted with coins, bolts by workers protesting sellout of sliding scale of wages, Florence, September 1992.**

ers? The Transitional Program was written with the U.S. working class in mind. At that time, and throughout this century, American workers didn't even have social-democratic consciousness but explicitly pro-capitalist ideas and supported the capitalist Democratic Party. What would a "historical retrogression" in their consciousness mean? Support for slavery, or for British colonial rule?

In fact, the political backwardness of the American workers was discussed at length prior to the founding of the Fourth International with leaders of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, some of whom had argued the Transitional Program was too advanced. Trotsky noted in these discussions (19 and 31 May 1938) that "the political backwardness of the American working class is very great," but stressed: "The program must express the objective tasks of the working class rather than the backwardness of the workers." Again, he stated:

"It is a fact that the American working class has a petty-bourgeois spirit, lacks revolutionary solidarity, is used to a high standard of living.... Our tasks don't depend on the mentality of the workers. The task is to develop the mentality of the workers. That is what the program should formulate and present before the advanced workers...."

"The class consciousness of the proletariat is backward, but consciousness is not such a substance as the factories, the mines, the railroads; it is more mobile, and under the blows of the objective crisis, the millions of unemployed, it can change rapidly."

And yet again: "I say here what I said about the whole program of transitional demands. The problem is not the mood of the masses but the objective situation." Marxism or "scientific socialism" begins, "as every science, not from subjective wishes, tendencies, or moods but from objective facts, from the material situation of the different classes and their relationships."

But what about in West Europe—can one discern such a decisive decline in socialist consciousness in the European working class? Today the consciousness of the vast majority



**Korean workers during general strike, 4 January 1997.**

of the European proletariat is reformist. It also had reformist consciousness 20 years ago when many labored under the illusion that Brezhnev's USSR represented "real, existing socialism." Certainly the destruction of the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states has "led many workers to question the viability of a planned economy," as the declaration of the Permanent Revolution Faction states. But that does not mean that these workers have made their peace with capitalism.

The PRF also pointed out that the constant attacks by the bourgeoisie have pushed key sectors of the working class to undertake arduous battles against capital. In those struggles, the immediate obstacles are the reformist workers parties, whether openly social-democratic or ex-Stalinist, which are today in the government, often in the form of a "popular front." In key centers of the class struggle, the crisis of proletarian leadership is as intense as ever, and the absence of a recognized revolutionary vanguard of the working class is if anything even more excruciating.

In Europe, the quintessential expression of this crisis in the recent period was the scene in Italy in late 1992 when workers exploded in fury at their reformist union and party leaders for having sold out the *scala mobile* (sliding scale of wages), a key gain of the 1969 labor battles. Among those pelted by worthless coins and bolts from the ranks were not just the ex-"Communist" social democrats of the PDS (Party of the Democratic Left) but also left-talking labor bureaucrats like the Metal Workers' Bruno Trentin and the leader of Rifondazione Comunista, Fausto Bertinotti. Those workers urgently needed an independent revolutionary vanguard, yet virtually the entire Italian Trotskyoid "far left" is buried inside Rifondazione, even as loyal members of its leadership (sometimes critical, but not always from the left). As a result, working-class anger was siphoned off into the election of the Prodi popular-front government.

In France during November-December 1995, hundreds of thousands of workers struck for weeks and repeatedly mobilized massively in the streets. Yet the burgeoning movement was held in check and then called off by the PS/PCF bureau-

crats at the point where it threatened to turn into a general strike. The labor fakery was able to pull this off with the vital aid of the ex-far left, now thoroughly integrated into union officialdom. With the popular front in office, the "big" pseudo-Trotskyist parties (LO, LCR, PT) are ostentatiously offering the Jospin government their services, hoping to get a piece of the class-collaborationist action (parliamentary seats, sinecures on government boards), while the smaller centrists try to pressure the "plural left" to the left.

In Latin America, this *intensification* of the crisis of revolutionary leadership is seen in explosions of working-class unrest in various parts of Argentina and elsewhere (Venezuela, Ecuador). They have been typically directed against bourgeois governments that were originally elected on a "populist" program, such as the

Peronist Menem in Argentina, and who then implemented IMF starvation policies. Almost annually general strikes have been called in Bolivia against rightist regimes. Yet with virtually the entire "socialist" left on its knees as a result of the collapse of the USSR and East European deformed workers states, the revolts and strikes dissipate or are easily taken over and liquidated by bourgeois-nationalist demagogues.

Meanwhile, the Latin American left has thrown itself into building the Foro de São Paulo, a sort of continental popular front, whose stars are the Mexican bourgeois nationalist Cárdenas and Brazilian social-democratic Workers Party (PT) leader Luis Inácio Lula da Silva. From the ex-guerrilla bourgeois liberals of the Nicaraguan FSLN and Salvadoran FMLN to the Castro-Stalinist Cuban Communist Party to various pseudo-Trotskyists, they are all in the pop front stew. The last meeting of the Foro (August 1997) brought it all together with



**Continental popular front: Mexican bourgeois-nationalist opposition leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Brazilian reformist Workers Party leader Lula at meeting of Foro de São Paulo in Brazil last year.**

Cárdenas embracing Lula under the auspices of the Mandelita PT mayor of the Brazilian state capital of Porto Alegre. In the past, the ICL stood out for its denunciation of popular-frontism in Latin America, not only in Chile and Brazil but also in Argentina, Bolivia, Central America, the Dominican Republic and Mexico—where there are no mass workers parties.

In East Asia, the powerful general strike of South Korean workers in January 1997 was run into the ground by a supposedly “militant” union leadership beholden to the bourgeois liberal opposition led by Kim Dae Jung. A year later, Kim has been elected president with a “mandate” from the imperialist and national capitalists to enforce the brutal conditions of IMF loans. Sacrificed on the alter of a popular front of class collaboration with this capitalist “democrat,” whose prime minister earlier served as front man for the South Korean military regime, workers now face the prospect of more than a million layoffs. Here, too, the situation cries out for a revolutionary workers party, fighting for revolutionary reunification of Korea, for political revolution in the North Korean deformed workers state to oust the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy, and for socialist revolution in the capitalist South, and the extension of the revolution to Japan and China. Such a party can only be forged on the program of authentic Trotskyism.

In Indonesia, bubbling discontent over the Asian economic crisis is being diverted by the Suharto dictatorship into chauvinist anti-Chinese riots, while militant unions are tied to the bourgeois-nationalist opposition leader Megawati (daughter of the former nationalist leader Sukarno). Here, too, popular frontism chains the workers and oppressed to the class enemy. As recently as a year and a half ago, the ICL denounced the danger of opposition popular fronts in Korea and Indonesia. Now, following the logic of its denial of a popular front in Mexico, it no longer mentions the popular front in its articles on these key Asian countries. It thus abandons a key programmatic component of Trotskyism.

Compared to the 1980s, one cannot talk of a qualitative, historical, deep decline in the will to struggle by the workers, or in desire for revolution or identification with socialism on the part of significant sectors. Yet beyond an evaluation of the period, the ICL leaders ultimately have an *idealist* conception of class consciousness. They see the role of the party as that of missionaries rather than as the advance guard of the proletariat, which develops the mentality of the workers through its sharp programmatic intervention in the class struggle. They have forgotten how quickly consciousness can change under the blows of economic and political crisis. They have the static view of those whose own consciousness is dominated by the accomplished fact. Like all revisionists, they underestimate the revolutionary capacity of the working class.

What is most notable in this “post-Soviet” period is the rapid collapse of self-proclaimed revolutionary organizations, the “far left” of yesteryear, including in particular many which falsely claimed to be Trotskyist. When the ICL talks of a qualitative retrogression in consciousness of “the left,” this has a degree of accuracy. But that should not require a retreat by the Trotskyists, quite the contrary. The policy of the pseudo-Trotskyists is *tailism*. Thus the USec laments in its 1992 “Pro-

grammatic Manifesto”:

“The masses themselves have not unleashed comprehensive struggles with an anti-capitalist dynamic over the last decade comparable to the 1960s and ’70s. There has not been a single victorious revolution since the Nicaraguan revolution of 1979. There hasn’t even been a single prolonged general strike in the imperialist countries or a single revolutionary explosion since the Portuguese revolution.”

So having no “radical” causes to tail after, the ex-“far left” becomes run-of-the-mill social democrats.

The ICL, registering that these former centrists have become reformists, that they no longer even pretend to be revolutionary, argues that this is the key fact for the ICL as well, and that we of League for the Fourth International are supposedly “insensitive” to this development. This argument demonstrates that the ICL defines itself as feeding off the petty-bourgeois, pseudo-radical left, seeing itself at the end of a continuum, the left of the “far left” which isn’t very left any more. Thus the ICL reflects the reformist “death of communism” syndrome at one remove. Yet the objective situation of the class struggle does not at all imply that authentic Trotskyism is more isolated.

*The crisis of proletarian leadership is even more central to the crisis of humanity, and the collapse of Stalinism combined with the crisis of social democracy underscores the fact that only the program of Trotskyism can provide the revolutionary answer to this crisis.* The evident bankruptcy of bureaucratic planning under Stalinist regimes, which foundered due to the impossibility of building socialism in one country, along with the wholesale dismantling of the social-democratic national “welfare state,” poses the need for international economic planning, governed by genuine soviet democracy, through world socialist revolution. What is urgently needed is a Trotskyist vanguard fighting to become the revolutionary leadership of the proletariat, a party that seeks to win workers to revolutionary consciousness through active intervention in the class struggle. Such a leadership would raise a program of transitional demands as the “bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution.” It would fight popular-frontism around the globe. It would seek to mobilize the working class against counterrevolution and the tottering Stalinist bureaucracies that are treacherously preparing the way for capitalism in the remaining deformed workers states.

But today the whole pseudo-Trotskyist spectrum rejects such a perspective, instead seeking to join or pressure popular fronts and Labour/social-democratic regimes to the left, as assorted Pabloists and a host of reformist/centrist outfits do; or ostentatiously “pull[ing] our hands out of the boiling water” of the class struggle, as the International Communist League is doing in one country after another, from Brazil to Mexico and France. Abstentionism and revisionism go hand-in-hand as the ICL today heads down a centrist course. As the ICL abandons core elements of the Trotskyist program, the League for the Fourth International continues the struggle to break the chains that bind the exploited and oppressed to their class enemy and to build revolutionary workers parties as part of a reformed Fourth International. ■

# Crisis in the ICL

When the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) expelled several of its long-time leading cadres in mid-1996 and shortly thereafter broke fraternal relations with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, ICL leaders portrayed this as a struggle that would strengthen the organization for the rough waters ahead in the post-Soviet period. Instead, it opened up a crisis that has engulfed most of the international tendency which for some three decades upheld the banner of authentic Trotskyism. The ICL's action in Brazil was a *betrayal*, abandoning a sharp class battle at the height of the struggle. This and the accompanying expulsions were the expression of a new political line, which is now being generalized with disastrous results. Today, the ICL is flailing about, abandoning historic positions one after another, spewing out lies to cover up its desertion, and losing long-time cadres in the process. In the last three years, a number of senior leaders of ICL sections in Australia, Britain, France, Mexico and elsewhere have quit in demoralization.

Yet some have taken a different path, choosing to continue the fight for the historic Spartacist program which the ICL leadership is abandoning—first in practice but increasingly at the theoretical and programmatic level as well. This led late last year to the formation of the Permanent Revolution Faction (PRF) in the Ligue Trotskyiste de France, including a member of the LTF's Central Committee and a member of the editorial board of *Le Bolchévique* before that body was dissolved a couple of years ago by the International Secretariat (I.S.). After a truncated "discussion" lasting barely a month, the PRF was expelled one week after the LTF conference and just days before the ICL's international conference.

The comrades who formed the PRF had recently fought against the abandonment of an "*Iskra*" perspective toward work among North African exiles and immigrants, as the I.S. renounced plans to publish an exile journal to cohere the nucleus of Trotskyist parties in the region. Then, when a powerful national truckers strike broke out last fall in France, presenting the first major confrontation with the Socialist-led popular-front government, they called for the LTF to publish a leaflet with a program of transitional demands for struggle—which was flatly opposed by the I.S. Drawing the lessons from these fights and the crises in the sections of the ICL, the PRF emphasized that the origin of the capitulations lay above all in the international leadership, which repeatedly conciliated rightist elements up to the point that they went "too far."

In an extensive platform analyzing the crisis of the ICL and in several shorter documents, the PRF declared its political solidarity with the Internationalist Group, refuted the lies put out by the I.S., and opposed the centrist course of the international leadership on key issues of the class struggle. The PRF platform noted that the I.S. itself had characterized a *majority* of the national sections of the ICL as out-and-out "centrist" or beset by centrism—that is, their revolutionary words were contradicted by opportunist deeds. This list of centrist-afflicted ICL sections included the Australian, French, German, Irish, Italian and Mexican sections.

If the British section didn't make this short list it was because it was too inert or moribund to do much of anything at all. Basically, everything outside the Spartacist League/U.S. and the Trotskyist League of Canada was in big trouble or already down the tubes. But the PRF pointed out that it was the increasingly erratic course of the international leadership that was generating opportunism and demoralization.

## Mexico

Two of the most challenged sections were precisely the SpAd (Spartakist Workers Party of Germany) and the GEM (Grupo Espartaquista de México), which had been the focal points of the earlier operations by the self-described "new I.S." to "clean out" the "shit," as the hastily dispatched I.S. representative promised to do in France. Apparently earlier cleansing operations left a lot to be desired, because the I.S. was having a devil of a time straightening out the miscreants. In an I.S. circular of 27 May 1997, international secretary Parks complained in her inimitable style:

"Currently the IG is assiduously prowling around our Mexican group, trying to find recruits by carving them out of the living body of our Mexican section and its youth group.... Regrettably our Mexican youth group in particular is inexplicably soft and porous to the poisonous IG. Thus it is reported that some comrades *kiss* Buenaventura when they meet him—despite the fact that he was expelled from their organization as a hostile and brazenly open agent for the IG.... I could understand such behavior if comrades who engaged in it were aware that they had a deadly contagious disease (rabies, whatever) and in so doing they were effectively destroying the IG. But this is not the case.

"No less than four youth members in the Mexican section—one of whom is a dual member—have offered themselves up for contact with the IG. Worse still is the case of the dual member who allegedly encouraged a youth member to en-

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gage in an *hour-long* phone call with Negrete....

"If youth comrades in Mexico wish to be contacts of the IG, then that is simply incompatible with membership in our youth group. You can't live in our house and simultaneously rent a room in theirs."

This ultimatum was followed by a letter from another member of the I.S. asking why, since "combatting the IG was the main political priority for the GEM"—a revealing statement in itself—"no one in the GEM leadership blew the whistle on the exchanges of handshakes and embraces with the IG?" The Mexican members' actions certainly give the lie to the ICL leadership's slander that under the "regime" of the former GEM leaders now in the Internationalist Group there was a "poisonous internal atmosphere" of "denigration and humiliation of comrades," particularly the youth. The "Mexico fight" was a vulgar purge, which the GEM members recognize implicitly.

A subsequent on-site inspection of the Mexican section by SLer Barbara F. sounded a further alarm about "shaking hands with, kissing and exchanging phone numbers with Iggies." Titled "Centrism and the GEM," this remarkable, not to say delirious, document carries the superhead: "A Killer Moth in the Night, the Virgin Mary in the Metro, Ashes in the Air and Permanent Revolution in Mexico." A footnote advises the reader to "see me and me alone for historical materialist illumination." And lest anyone think that her ravings lacked the imprimatur of the leadership, the author says the report is "the fruit of some hours of consultation that I had the privilege of spending with two leading cadre of the ICL, Jim Robertson and Al Nelson." Barbara F. rails that a youth member said "sometimes our opponents [i.e., the IG] can be right," while another member "raised the possibility of seeking an agreement with the party permitting ongoing exchange with the IG." She reports that a senior GEM leader (who resigned from the organization shortly thereafter) was "forced to physically take [a youth member] by the shoulders and turn him around" to stop him from talking to an IG comrade. After giving a class against the IG, Barbara reported:

"I ended the class by asking them to stand up with fists raised and repeat with me three times, 'Our International—love it or leave it.' This itself became a point of dispute in the discussion round."

One youth defended this, reportedly saying "that in order to lead at the height of revolutionary struggle we will have to chant and shout and show that we love our organization," while another objected "that I'd made him feel like he was a child back in the Catholic church."

Behind all this concern about kissing and shaking hands and shouting about "love it or leave it" is the political fact that the GEM leadership was having difficulty convincing the membership that there was no popular front around Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. The GEM had warned Mexican workers, leftists, youth, women and everyone else about the Cardenista popular front ever since this front was created in the 1988 presidential elections to control opposition to the decaying semi-bonapartist PRI regime. But now that the son of former president General Lázaro Cárdenas was poised to be elected governor of Mexico City, the GEM suddenly abandoned this historic position. While

the ICL leadership now likes to ridicule this position by referring to a few "rag-tag leftists" around Cárdenas and his bourgeois-nationalist PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution), GEM members had to argue that this was their new position in the middle of the May Day march of several hundred thousand workers, leftists, urban and rural poor. You could see the popular front in action as Cárdenas spoke from the podium of one of the sponsoring "independent" union federations.

To this day, GEM supporters find it difficult if not impossible to defend the ICL's new denial of the existence of an opposition popular front in Mexico when it is staring them in the face, particularly as the ICL is denying its own past line. We can attest, however, that they are dutifully carrying out the policy behind the "analysis": after producing *no* propaganda concerning the elections last July until long afterwards, they are now *not* intervening to call on workers and the oppressed to break from the class-collaborationist front led by Cárdenas. And this includes, in particular, at one of the strongholds of the Cardenista popular front, the National University (UNAM), where the GEM has a student fraction and where there are *thousands* of leftists who support Cárdenas from *outside* the PRD. As "socialist" supporters of the popular front in the University Student Council (CEU) refused to support secondary school student protests against the removal of the vestiges of open admissions, saying now is not the time to embarrass the new governor of the capital, Cárdenas, the GEM was nowhere to be found.

Likewise, the members of the Mexican section have been thrown into total confusion by the ICL leadership's dramatic flip-flops on the fundamental question of permanent revolution (see below).

## Germany

The other ICL section already subjected to a prophylactic "cleansing" by the I.S. was the SpAD. In 1995-96, a frame-up fight was waged over work in Germany—based on the outrageous invention that Jan Norden, long-time *Workers Vanguard* editor and member of the I.S. until the 1996 purges, supposedly claimed that the ICL was not the revolutionary leadership—or even the revolutionary formation—in the fight for political revolution and against counterrevolution in the DDR (East Germany) in 1989-90. Following the expulsions in June 1996, the "Second Plenum of the Ninth Central Committee" of the SL/U.S. (9-10 November 1996) declared, "The struggle against Norden and his small coterie has armed and strengthened our party," while adding warily: "but the issue is not exhausted" (Spartacist League/U.S. *Internal Bulletin* No. 61, December 1996). In a letter circulated in the ICL, the I.S. coined the slogan: "As Norden Leaves, Thousands Rejoin." Not hardly!

The series of false fights over Germany, Mexico and Brazil grievously harmed and weakened the ICL. The expulsions were followed by innumerable extraordinary plenums and emergency conferences, without providing a clear axis for struggle to the national sections. This was particularly true in Germany. Norden had pointed out in several documents that the SpAD was coming under the influence of left social democracy and retreating into a policy of obdurate abstentionism. Since the rightist elements in the SpAD defending that policy received the backing of the I.S.,

they soon implemented their line. The result was: capitulation to social democracy and abstentionism.

The former took the form of a genuinely opportunist orientation toward a faction in the Mandelites group in Germany (the RSB). The German Pablo/Mandelites are shot through with the politics of social democracy, having spent the entire post-World War II period up through 1968 in the SPD. Now, in a "Report on the State of the SpAD" (23 January 1997), Parks reports as an insight gleaned from a call with Nelson that the problems with the German section could be traced back to its "longstanding inability to deal with West German social democracy"!

Meanwhile, last June the long-time production manager of *Spartakist* worked behind a picket line during a Berlin construction workers strike. Instead of expelling him, the I.S. recommended that his resignation be accepted, since some of the SpAD leaders had effectively sanctioned his scabbing. The comrades of the PRF comment in their platform document on this shameful episode, showing that it is not an isolated incident. In addition, in a 26 December 1997 note to the I.S. they asked for "all the documents or reports on the intervention (or absence of intervention) by the SpAD during the student strikes last month." In response came a letter from Berlin (2 January 1998) showing how far the abstentionist policy in the German section had gone in the student strikes last November. As thousands of students were protesting and occupying campuses, what was the policy of the SpAD? "By declaring the student occupation at the Humboldt University the 'gate to scabbing,' we excluded ourselves" from any active intervention in this "one campus in the world where we have a significant concentration of students."

This ludicrous policy reached the point that:

"In the youth and in the local exec, comrades were very uncomfortable with boycotting the student general assemblies and the occupied strike headquarters. But appetites to intervene were paralyzed by the student pickets in front of the university. Standing on this 'picket line,' our youth denounced ex-member F. at first as a scab because he went into the occupied east wing."

The 2 January letter attributes this policy to "a false counterposition between propaganda and action." A letter by Jon B. for the I.S. referred to an equation by the SpAD of student pickets with workers' picket lines. No, the SpAD's policy was the predictable consequence of the line put forward by the I.S. taken to its illogical extreme—whereupon the I.S. intervenes to "rectify" the situation. Does the ICL leadership, or much of the membership, have an inkling as to what it says about their new politics that they could denounce as "scabs" students who were occupying a university? And meanwhile, they let an actual scab resign rather than expelling such a class traitor!

### Whose Chauvinism?

The crisis in the ICL came to a head in the Ligue Trotskyste de France, which is hardly accidental. France has been at the forefront of workers struggles in recent years, and here is where the ICL leaders' claim of a "historical retrogression in the political consciousness of the workers movement" clashes most sharply with reality. Even before the factional struggle broke out, the I.S. recognized that the French section was in crisis. A letter by ICL

international secretary Parks (17 October 1997) reported, "The LTF has not recruited anyone since the big strike wave in December '95 when one high school student joined the youth." Given the turbulence in France in recent years, this takes some doing. Parks continued: "We noted in the [January 1996] IEC memorandum that we would recruit at the expense of our centrist opponents or vice versa. In France, it's vice versa." An I.S. resolution declared, "The LTF as presently constituted and led is not viable as a section of the ICL."

At that time, Parks wrote in another letter to the I.S. (21 October 1997) that "it is very clear from the recent fight in the LTF that comrades Djura and Zakaria are potentially a very large part of the solution to our problems in the LTF...." However, when these comrades a few days later called for a leaflet in the French truckers strike, suddenly they were no longer "a very large part of the solution" but instead the focus of the "problem" in the LTF. Since the I.S. had previously declared the LTF leadership to be centrist, the latter was now declared "right centrist" while the dissident comrades were labeled "left centrists." Yet when they declared the Permanent Revolution Faction in mid-December, the I.S. quickly cobbled together a "majority faction" together with the open rightists. This "plural majority" never answered the minority's political arguments and analysis. Instead, the ICL leadership unleashed a barrage of personal invective tinged with national chauvinism against the PRF comrades.

At the LTF conference, the spokesman for the I.S. was Susan A., a former principal leader of the LTF. In her presentation, she demanded "full and detailed confessions" from the PRF comrades about contact with the IG. She cited a 22 August 1997 letter by Djura and Zakaria sharply criticizing the I.S. for abandoning the Iskra perspective toward North Africa. Refuting charges of "national narrowness," they wrote that they opposed a policy like that of the Jewish Bund in Russia, in which only North African comrades would be involved in this work. "What do they know of the history of the Bund," the I.S. rep haughtily said of the minority, adding that they must have gotten an e-mail from Norden! Aside from being false, it is deeply insulting to imply that comrades of North African origin are too ignorant to know about the Bund. In discussions last August they cited Isaac Deutscher on the fight over the Bund at the 1903 congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party, a 1986 presentation by an ex-member to the LTF's Commission on North African Work, and a recent book on the *General History of the Bund*.

This arrogant disdain is no aberration coming from the ICL leadership these days. During the fight over Mexico in April 1996, Parks reviled comrade Socorro, a Chicana former farm worker, as "dim" and having her head in a "sewer"! At that time, Parks also referred to the LQB as being "dim" about the "dangers of international affiliation." In January, *Workers Vanguard* vilely referred to the largely black Brazilian comrades, who are under vicious attack by the capitalist state, as "dangerous hustlers." And now, the LTF's *Le Bolchévik* (Spring 1998), in a thoroughly dishonest article about the French faction fight, publishes extracts of a majority document with the disgusting chauvinist headline: "The PRF Has Found Its Land of Asylum: France." At a time when the popular front government is stepping up deportations,

what is this piece of filth supposed to mean?

Then came the vile and absurd accusation by the majority that the comrades of the PRF had "capitulated to French chauvinism." Why? Because the minority hailed the heroic internationalist work of the French and other Trotskyists in World War II who sought to recruit German soldiers and sailors (and were sent to the concentration camps and executed by the Nazis for doing so), just as they hailed the U.S. Trotskyists who were jailed for their courageous opposition to the inter-imperialist slaughter. The PRF comrades had written that the claim by Nelson, that there was "little inspiration in the sordid history of French Trotskyism," had an element of truth but was one-sided and an example of national narrowness. The LTF majority rushed to demonstrate its allegiance to the I.S., incredibly claiming that only a couple of Frenchmen were actually involved in the internationalist work under Nazi occupation.

The charge of capitulation to French chauvinism directed against comrades from a former colony is particularly despicable coming from the French section of the ICL, whose leaders as late as 1992 refused to acknowledge that Algeria had militarily won the war of independence against France. The LTF leaders were rightly condemned by the second international conference of the ICL in that year for their position capitulating to diehard French colonialists who refused to admit defeat. This is what the ICL had to say about the French section then:

Motion: "The LTF, reflecting some kind of degeneration, has suffered a general collapse of leadership following a prolonged and increasingly wide departure from Trotskyist internationalism as indicated by the following:

- 1) a capitulatory attitude toward opponents work as expressed in the relationship with the centrist Damien Elliott;
- 2) an abstention on shop floor struggle including the absurd rationale that militant workers are opponents;
- 3) the truly weird position held in the LTF, that Algeria didn't win the war with France;
- 4) shamefully treating our Algerian supporters as colonial people without a voice;
- 5) the creation of a Bonapartist regime reflecting a fear of the ranks and to conceal the leadership's unsavory political record;
- 6) and a necessarily growing anti-internationalism and lack of collaboration expressed most sharply by a substantive breach of democratic centralism over the Algeria article.

"In conclusion the LTF is not representative of an authentic Trotskyist grouping...."

—from ICL *International Internal Bulletin* No. 40, March 1997

In fact, there is a striking continuity between the LTF's contemptible policies and functioning then and now, with the difference that today its policies are initiated, backed and enforced by the international leadership of the ICL.

At the beginning of the faction fight, another I.S. delegate, Adam, sent back to the LTF to bring it to heel, declared in a presentation that the goal of the majority would be to "humiliate" and "demoralize" the members of the minority. In their 26 December note to the I.S., the PRF comrades wrote that such tactics would only lead to "pronounced demoralization of the members by inculcating them with cynicism." In response, international secretary Parks explicitly endorsed the policy of "hu-

miliation," claiming that this would have been Lenin's policy. When a few days later Adam again declared the goal of humiliating the PRF (which *Le Bolchévique* now shamelessly repeats in print), a minority faction member told him heatedly that it was shameful to direct such remarks at comrades from a semi-colonial country. He should think, she added, about what it would mean for members of the SL/U.S. to say they intended to "humiliate" black comrades.

As for Parks' defense of this disgusting tactic, Lenin *never* engaged in such demeaning demagoguery toward communists from subject peoples. It was the Russifier *Stalin* who sought to belittle and humiliate opposition comrades of non-Russian origins. For this Stalin was roundly condemned by Lenin, in his last battle before he was fatally stricken. The Bolshevik leader insisted that proletarian class solidarity required profound thoughtfulness and sensitivity on such matters, and denounced Stalin for "carelessly fling[ing] about accusations of 'nationalist-socialism'." Lenin warned against "the violation of this equality, if only through negligence or jest" (from "The Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomization'" [December 1922]). Lenin's warning holds with full force today: those who carelessly fling about accusations of nationalism against internationalist communists from oppressed countries, those who talk cynically of "humiliating" and "demoralizing" such comrades, are *incapable* of leading international socialist revolution. On the contrary, they are reflecting the prejudices of, and making their peace with, "their own" bourgeoisies.

We have been measured in responding to the insults bandied about by the ICL leaders, but this endless repetition of chauvinist epithets is clearly no slip. It is part of their new politics.

### Confessions and Revisions

In the recent faction fight in the French section, the majority, on instructions from the I.S., put up a bizarre photo montage in the LTF office consisting of pictures of Stalin, Castro, Norden and Negrete. This device is a classic example of the *amalgam*, equating the fight for authentic Trotskyism being waged by the comrades of the Permanent Revolution Faction with Stalinism. The majority found this so "amusing" that when comrades of the PRF were assigned to work in a particular room doing huge translations—deliberately to keep them so busy that they could not write more internal documents, or even read the documents attacking them, many of which they were never given copies of—the displays multiplied and appeared over their workplace. (Later the majority added photos of Algerian FLN leaders Boumedienne and Ben Bella.) When the PRF comrades pointed out that the majority was only demeaning itself, that it was adopting methods reminiscent of Maoism, and asked when they would start using dunce caps, the next day dunce caps appeared on the displays. Meanwhile, at meetings the majority would chant in chorus demanding "*des aveux, des aveux*" (confessions, confessions). This is quite a statement in a country where everyone on the left is familiar with the book by Arthur London on the 1948 Stalinist show trial of Rudolf Slansky in Czechoslovakia titled *L'Aveu* (The Confession).

The I.S. never answered the analysis by the PRF of the crisis of the ICL, of the increasing abstentionism of the I.S., of its abandonment of the struggle to forge communist nuclei in the semi-colonial countries, of its betrayal in Brazil, of its capitulation over the popular front in Mexico. After several weeks, the majority came up with a limp document inventing a new charge—that the PRF and the IG supposedly don't care about, or oppose, the fight against counterrevolution in China. This kind of "gotcha" politics, constantly inventing new charges as soon as the last batch is disproven, is the antithesis of serious Marxist polemics.

The ICL's overriding aim is to obfuscate, and sometimes it manages to confuse itself. One of the few answers to any of the political points raised by the PRF was Jim Robertson's admission, in a presentation on 20 December 1997, that the ICL's whole argument against the Internationalist Group over permanent revolution was based on a false premise. We have insisted that the struggle in Mexico and Latin America was against *capitalism* and not "feudalism," "the heritage of Spanish feudal colonialism," "feudal remnants," or "feudal peonage," as the ICL claimed, pointing out that these concoctions were thought up by the Stalinists to justify their program of "two-stage revolution." In response, the I.S. and *Workers Vanguard* insisted that this meant we were "denying permanent revolution." This is uncannily like the Stalinists accusing Trotsky of "underestimating the peasantry."

Last October, a note was circulated in the ICL reporting:

"Jim has been thinking about the Internationalist Group's position on Mexico and permanent revolution.... He had the following comments:

"The IG has the peculiar view that because capitalism is global, all the component elements of the world are necessarily capitalist as well. So since Mexico can be termed a capitalist country, the IG then insists that all the property relations within Mexico are also capitalist. (One has an image of Norden regarding Pizarro and Cortés as capitalist entrepreneurs. But these should not be confused with Andrew Carnegie—they were conquistadors from the Most Catholic Country who had hit the New World looking for loot.)

"One can make all sorts of arguments about Latin America because conditions differed in different countries at different times. The most unambiguous example of where the IG's position is wrong is the American South prior to the Civil War. The Southern system of slavery was most definitely not capitalist; indeed the purpose of the war was to bring the Southern economy in line with the capitalist North."

The comrades of the PRF pointed out in a document prepared for a scheduled discussion on the question, "Once Again on Permanent Revolution" (29 December 1997), that Trotsky never made permanent revolution dependent on there being feudal or semi-feudal conditions, and that he applied it to all countries of belated capitalist development, whether they had a feudal history (like Russia) or not (like China). The PRF also pointed out that the ICL leaders' treatment of slavery in the American South was diametrically opposed to the analysis of Marx, who insisted that slave plantations were part of a world capitalist system.

The planned discussion was postponed, and just before it was held a couple of weeks later a new document arrived, con-

sisting of a transcription of Jim Robertson's remarks the day after the faction was declared. He now discovered that what *WV* previously called "Spanish feudal colonialism" was actually "the early mercantile capitalism of Spain," and added:

"I think it's a mistake—it's an easy one to fall into—when we wrote about Mexico that there are pre-capitalist survivals. The only pre-capitalist survivals in Mexico would be human sacrifice. Because the Spaniards who came, although their heads were filled with feudal ideas, were practicing mercantile capitalism whether they liked it or not. And the hacienda system, which I gather is largely displaced most places in Latin America, was production for the world market; it was the analogue to Southern chattel slave plantations, for example. These are not pre-capitalist survivals but the product of a division of the world in which some people get the good stuff and whole areas of the world are kept down."

The whole basis of the ICL's previous argument against us on this question suddenly disappeared. From one day to the next, the members of the majority faction had to change their line. Most were struck dumb, others soon came up with the line that their previous line was just an "error of analysis," ignoring the multiple claims spread over a whole year that by disagreeing with this analysis the IG was renouncing or gutting permanent revolution. Now the *Le Bolchévik* prints the most minimal correction, saying it was "inaccurate" for them to refer to "feudal" remnants, and accusing us of making a big deal out of this characterization. It says nothing about the fact that their entire polemic against the IG over permanent revolution hinged on the revisionist claim they now withdraw.

### Lies and "Clarifications"

Marxism is a guide to revolutionary action. It is therefore exacting on questions of theory and analysis, for there are almost always programmatic implications. In the fight against the existing leaderships of the proletariat, which use all manner of false consciousness to bolster the bourgeois order, Marxists seek to achieve political clarity through polemical struggle. But over the past year and a half of voluminous "polemics" against the Internationalist Group/Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil in the pages of *Workers Vanguard*, *Spartacist* and virtually every other publication of the ICL, readers have found political *confusion* as they sought to decipher the twists and turns of the arguments against us. The writers flail about blindly, using arguments of any kind, no matter how inconsistent with previous claims. Above all, the press of the ICL, which used to be proud of its ruthless honesty, is now filled with sheer inventions, lies and smears about the IG/LQB, many of them self-contradictory.

Of course, once the practice of prevarication takes hold, it spreads quickly. We're not the only ones the ICL press is lying about, as the I.S. itself admits when it has its guard down and thinks we won't read what they say. The PRF comrades note how I.S. leaders complained last fall that the LTF was writing phony polemics against its opponents. Parks wrote (letter of 17 October 1997) that: "I experienced first hand the ways in which the LTF's propaganda disarms comrades and enables our opponents to dismiss us with a wave of the hand." Nelson writes in response, in a letter of the same date, that "the leadership...lies to



the I.S. and politically disorganizes and misleads its members.” Being unable or unwilling to combat centrist and reformist opponents, “they resort to superficial or falsified polemics, as with LO” (Lutte Ouvrière). And it’s not only the LTF. The year before, I.S. spokesman Jon B. wrote of the Spartacist League/Britain and the polemics in its paper, *Workers Hammer*:

“Unable to deal with a somewhat more complex reality, the SL/B resorted to ‘simplifying’ (i.e. falsifying) the positions of our opponents. That is the kiss of death, enabling our opponents to dismiss us as liars and thereby keep their membership sealed off from our criticisms. And if we have to lie about our opponents in order to deal with them it means we have no confidence in ourselves and our program.”

—“Opponents Work/Propaganda—SL/B and SpAD” (7 July 1996)

But lying is a learned trait, and the writers for *Le Bolchévique* and *Workers Hammer* learned how from reading *Workers Vanguard*, *Spartacist* and the internal reports by the ICL leadership. For the last two years, they have been churning out an endless stream of lying smears against us, distorting our positions, distorting the ICL’s own past positions, ignoring proven facts, picking up and retailing lies from the steel bosses’ press and pro-cop provocateurs in Brazil, all on the premise that anything goes to get the IG/LQB. The ICL smears are not only false, they are so demonstrably false that they aren’t believable.

Along with the lies comes the cover-up. Take the attack on Norden for saying in his January 1995 speech at Humboldt University in Berlin that the key to the triumph of counterrevolution in the DDR was “the absence of revolutionary leadership.” It is interesting to read in the ICL’s internal bulletins a response by Parks from 18 November 1996 to a member of the German section who pointed to a picture caption in *Spartacist* No. 45-46 (Winter 1990-91), which said: “In absence of revolutionary leadership, nascent political revolution in DDR was overtaken by capitalist counterrevolution.” According to Parks, this caption “contradicted the main line of our analysis on Germany on the question of revolutionary leadership.... Indeed that reveals the two counterposed lines which wrongly coexisted in the organization until comrade Nelson engaged the political fight with Norden.” We pointed to that same picture caption in *The Internationalist* No. 2 (April-May 1997). It turns out that the ICL leadership now rejects this, but they haven’t said so publicly.

Even more interesting is how the I.S. covers up *internally*. This is shown in a curious document by ICL leader Andrews, described in ICL *International Internal Bulletin* No. 40 (March 1997) as an “edited transcript” of his remarks at the January 1996 International Executive Committee (IEC) meeting “as clarified in remarks at the SL/U.S. CC plenum on 9 November 1996.” This concerns the same issue of whether the ICL was the revolutionary leadership in Germany in 1989-90. At the London IEC meeting, Andrews had gotten up to say that this way of posing the question was metaphysical, that we were “a challenge for revolutionary leadership,” that “we were in the struggle to become” a revolutionary leadership. When Norden cited this a week later at the conference of the SpAD, saying that was a correct way of putting it, this caused consternation among the leadership and an urgent phone call was placed to the ICL center to get a

transcript of Andrews’ remarks. Now in the edited version of his remarks, “clarified” nine months later, we read that “we were revolutionary leadership in the struggle to *become*” (*sic*). So with careful editing and clarifying, Andrews no longer says that the ICL was a challenge for revolutionary leadership, that it was in a struggle to become the revolutionary leadership, but that it *was* the leadership, albeit somewhat ungrammatically engaged in the struggle to become (what?).

We recall also that when *Workers Vanguard* declared that there was no longer a popular front in Mexico, this too was termed a “clarification” of its line. So when the ICL talks today of “clarifying” something, keep a sharp lookout.

## Bureaucratic Methods and Centrist Politics

The political *methods* of the ICL leadership show signs of pronounced degeneration, but *behind the high-handed bureaucratic methods is a centrist political course*. Precisely because the I.S. undertook a pre-emptive strike to eliminate in advance internal opposition to its desertion in Brazil, and because the new line of the organization is in the process of developing, we did not rush to make a final judgement of where the ICL is going. But with the further development of the internal crisis and the experience of the factional struggle by the PRF, it is possible to draw some further conclusions. The ICL leaders themselves feel the need to elaborate their centrist new course.

We have pointed to a developing “drift toward abstention” on the part of the ICL, drawing a parallel to the American left social democrat Daniel De Leon, whose abstract leftism was combined with a refusal to intervene in “partial struggles” of the working class. The I.S.’s line on the French truckers strike confirms that this is a conscious policy. As the comrades of the PRF noted in their presentation to the LTF conference, many of the crises in the sections of the ICL have their origin in the glaring contradiction between the international leadership’s view of a post-Soviet period of all-around defeats for the working class and the reality of sharp struggles providing openings for intervention by communists. Whether in a phase of frenetic activism or when keeping the membership immersed in internal tasks, the I.S.’s zigzag course has provided no coherent direction for the class struggle. This is not accidental.

Why did the I.S. desert from the struggle in Brazil? Just because they couldn’t line up the LQB against Norden and Negrete, as the Mensheviks of the misnamed Bolshevik Tendency claim? This is penny-ante Kremlinology, not Marxism. Because of cowardice, as the BT and the ICL pretend we say? We accuse the ICL leadership of something far worse—committing a betrayal of the Trotskyist program. The I.S.’s abandonment of the *Iskra* perspective toward North African exiles points to the origins of this betrayal. It is not just that the I.S. feared the “boiling water” of the class struggle in Brazil, judging that the “risks to the vanguard” (namely itself) were “unacceptable”—though they would be happy to leave the LQB to face the consequences in a struggle the ICL had encouraged. It wasn’t simply an untested leadership realizing that it didn’t know what it was doing in a hot situation. Dropping the perspective of a journal directed to North African exiles and immigrants in Europe indi-

cates that the I.S. is *turning its back on the struggle to cohere communist nuclei in semi-colonial countries.*

The platform of the Permanent Revolution Faction states this conclusion, and points to an earlier parallel—the case of the Italian centrist social democrat G.M. Serrati. At the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920, Serrati opposed the theses on the national and colonial question presented by Lenin, saying they harbored the danger of opportunism. With a welter of leftist verbiage about how Lenin's theses could open the way to class collaboration with the bourgeoisies of the colonial countries, Serrati was in fact continuing the shameful policy of the Second International of failing to fight against colonial and semi-colonial domination by the imperialist bourgeoisies.

De Leon in the U.S., Serrati in Italy—these are representatives of a left-centrist variant of social democracy (Serrati's wing of the Italian Socialist Party was known as the Maximalists) in the pre-World War I period. This is the direction in which the ICL leadership is heading today. They deny there is a popular front in Mexico, in order not to have to fight to break workers, students and others from it. They refuse to put out propaganda with a transitional program in the first major strike against the popular-front government in France, thus leaving the field open for centrists who seek to pressure the popular front in power. The ICL now says that the Stalinists "led" the counterrevolution in East Germany, thus amnestying the Social Democrats who, as the ICL previously (and correctly) said, were the spearhead of capitalist reunification.

The PRF documents reveal that in polemicizing internally against the Internationalist Group, ICL leaders explicitly *accept* the supposed reality of the bourgeois/reformist "death of communism" lie, just quibbling over the terminology. And in the next breath, the ICL *rejects* the central thesis of Trotsky's Transitional Program, namely that the crisis of humanity is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership. In arguing (against the IG) that this thesis is no longer "adequate," that there has been a "qualitative retrogression" in the consciousness of the working class itself, it provides an argument for *not* intervening with a revolutionary program to fight against the present reformist leaderships. In drawing defeatist conclusions from a historic defeat for the world proletariat—the counterrevolution in the USSR and East Europe—the evolution of the ICL points to a recurring phenomenon in the history of the Marxist movement.

Trotsky noted that the bloody defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871 led to the first appearance of the anti-Marxist conception of an "isolated socialist state," in the program of the German Social Democrat Vollmar at the end of that decade. The defeat of the German Revolution in 1923 was a major factor in the consolidation of the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, whose line of building "socialism in one country" was a justification for not fighting for socialist revolution internationally. In the 1930s, the world-historic defeat for the proletariat represented by Hitler's 1933 victory in Germany was the excuse for the Stalinized Comintern's going over to reformism, in the form of the class-collaborationist "popular front" which became the policy of CPs around the world from 1935 on.

Nor does the logic of the class struggle spare those who call

themselves Trotskyists. When after World War II there was a relative stabilization of capitalism in Europe while Stalinism expanded its sway, this led the principal leader of the weakened Fourth International, Michel Pablo, to conclude that the fight for an independent revolutionary leadership was no longer key. This Pabloist revisionism ultimately led to the destruction of the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution.

As we have pointed out (see "The Post-Soviet Period: Bourgeois Offensive and Sharp Class Battles," in *The Internationalist* No. 1, January-February 1997), counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states has given rise to a period in which conditions are extremely *uneven* around the world. In the countries of the former Soviet bloc, there has been a pronounced rise in chauvinist terror as new capitalist rulers compete in using nationalist poison to consolidate their regimes. In China, the drive toward counterrevolution is in full swing, but faces an increasingly restive proletariat. Southeast Asia is a powderkeg as a result of the meltdown of its capitalist economies last year. In the U.S., class struggle was at a historic low point until the Teamsters UPS strike last year, the largest labor battle in decades. Latin America has seen numerous general strikes, as well as peasant revolts in Mexico and Brazil. The West European bourgeoisies, emboldened by the destruction of the USSR, have launched an across-the-board offensive against the so-called "welfare state," but have been met with sharp working-class resistance.

The counterrevolution that swept East Europe has not supplanted the crisis of revolutionary leadership but if anything made it more acute. Trotsky wrote in *The Third International After Lenin* (1928): "The sharpening contradictions of this struggle for 'stabilization' or rather of the struggle for the further existence and development of capitalism prepare at each new stage the prerequisites for new international and class upheavals, that is, for new revolutionary situations, the development of which depends entirely upon the proletarian party." Seven decades later, the capitalist system is no more stable, and future development still depends entirely upon a revolutionary proletarian leadership.

Today, the Internationalist Group, Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil and Permanent Revolution Faction join in fighting to reforge the Fourth International on the program of authentic Trotskyism. We publish here the documents of the PRF in its struggle against the centrist course of the ICL leadership, as a contribution to that fight and the fusion our organizations. Trotsky noted in his 1937 pamphlet "Stalinism and Bolshevism," written at the height of a previous "crisis of Marxism," that "Great political defeats inevitably provoke a reconsideration of values, generally occurring in two directions." Thus, "the routinists, centrists and dilettantes, frightened by defeat, do their best to destroy the authority of revolutionary tradition and go backward in their search for a 'New Word'." At the same, Trotsky wrote, "the true vanguard, enriched by the experience of defeat, defends with tooth and nail the heritage of revolutionary thought and on this basis attempts to educate new cadres for the mass struggle to come." This is the task that we carry on today. ■



**Expulsions From the Ligue Trotskyiste de France –  
ICL Accelerates Slide Toward Abstentionism and Centrism**

### *Communism Lives* **In the Struggles of the Workers and Oppressed And in the Trotskyist Program *Reforge the Fourth International!***

**Declaration of the Permanent Revolution Faction, 3 February 1998**

The International Communist League (ICL) has just expelled the Permanent Revolution Faction (PRF), which fought against the abstentionist and centrist course of the organization. The new course of the ICL was expressed most dramatically in its shameful flight from an important class battle led by the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB) to expel police from the union movement. The methodology that led to this betrayal is now being generalized by the leadership of the ICL, which seeks to justify this by revising central theses of the Spartacist tendency and Trotskyism. This new expulsion, from the Ligue Trotskyiste de France (LTF), included a member of the LTF Central Committee and a member of the former editorial board of *Le Bolchévik*. This comes after the expulsions of long-time leaders of the ICL from the Spartacist League/U.S. and the Grupo Espartaquista de México in 1996, who subsequently founded the Internationalist Group/Grupo Internacionalista (IG). In fighting against the drift of the ICL, whose constant zigzags produced a generalized crisis in the organization, the PRF was formed in political solidarity with the program of the IG.

Developments in the international situation after the counterrevolution in the USSR and East Europe have had an unprecedented impact on the International Communist League. By the admission of the International Secretariat (I.S.) itself, a majority of the [national] sections have been characterized either as centrist or afflicted by centrism. In the space of a year and a half, these sections have had several conferences aimed at clarifying the situation and putting the sections back on the rails. However, one can see that these cures were unable to exorcise anything. The evidence shows that the national sections reflected (sometimes to the point of caricature) a line coming from the international leadership. As the PRF stated in its counter-report at the last conference of the LTF, the political disorientation of the ICL is the fruit of the huge contradiction and gap between the vision of the world purveyed by the international leadership, which only sees defeats everywhere, and the living reality of the class struggle. In the absence of a coherent line, we have experienced precipitous veering, oscil-

lating between frenetic activism without a strategy and (more frequently) abstentionism that flees from any external intervention. Moreover, this has led a whole series of experienced cadres to resign from the organization.

This situation of generalized crisis reflects the pressures of this new post-Soviet period on the ICL. As Trotsky pointed out in *Lessons of October*, defeats of the proletariat are always accompanied by sharp turns, even within the vanguard party. The defeat for the world proletariat and all the oppressed represented by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state and the bureaucratically deformed workers states of East Europe has served for the ICL leadership as an alibi to justify a tendency toward abstentionism, fleeing from and avoiding struggles when they don't deny their existence altogether. To back up this policy, the ICL came to the conclusion that the historical crisis of humanity is no longer reduced to the crisis of proletarian leadership, but that the proletariat itself is no longer up to its tasks, due to a "historical retrogression in the political consciousness of the workers movement" (Call for the Third Conference of the ICL). Thus the zigzags characterizing the current policy of the ICL reflect the contradiction between its formal identification with the Trotskyist program and its defeatist vision of the present period.

This contradiction leads to programmatic revisions on several fundamental questions. The central thesis of Trotsky's Transitional Program, the founding program of the Fourth International, is that "the historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership." The negation of this thesis was at the heart of the destruction of the Fourth International in 1950-53 by Pabloist revisionism. This key phrase introduced the main document of the Second International Conference of the ICL in 1992. But now it is simply swept under the rug. A top leader of the ICL declared in a letter, directed against the IG which reaffirmed this thesis, that: "Today, the crisis is not *limited* to the crisis of revolutionary leadership of the working class. The working classes throughout the world are qualitatively more politically disoriented and

organizationally dispersed." From that, he concluded that "we have been thrown back to before 1914." The Permanent Revolution Faction fought this impressionist, anti-materialist and deeply anti-Trotskyist thesis head on, insisting that we are still in the imperialist era, which is the epoch of wars and revolutions—another conception that is lacking in the new declaration of principles of the ICL.

Prior to the constitution of the PRF, its members waged political struggles for a Trotskyist intervention by the LTF in the last [French] truckers strike and against the abandonment of the perspective of regrouping North African cadres in exile to forge the nucleus of a Trotskyist party around an exile journal. During the truckers strike, the I.S. refused to publish a leaflet to intervene in this first important strike confronting the racist, anti-worker popular-front government of [Socialist Party prime minister] Lionel Jospin and [Communist Party transport minister] Jean-Claude Gayssot. The faction's members fought for the LTF to intervene with demands putting forward a program of proletarian opposition to this bourgeois government of class collaboration. It called for extending the strike and electing strike committees, to provide an arena for the confrontation of the revolutionary program with that of the strikebreaking bureaucrats; for the formation of workers defense groups against the fascists, who attacked the strike; for the defense of immigrants, to break with the popular front, build a revolutionary workers party and fight for a Socialist United States of Europe.

It is through this struggle for the revolutionary program that communists bring to the most advanced elements of the working class and oppressed the consciousness of their historic tasks, to forge a Trotskyist party tested in battle, and not through passive "commentaryism" and abstract propaganda, which is more and more the refrain of the leadership of the ICL. To justify its refusal to put forward demands for the truckers strike against the union bureaucracy and the popular-front government, the leadership of the ICL had to redefine economism, identifying it with any intervention in economic struggles. It thereby encouraged and fueled a line which already predominated in the French section, leading to the collapse of its leadership and the paralysis of the section during the strikes of November-December 1995. At that time, the abstentionist policy was concentrated in the Central Committee of the LTF, even though it thought it was following the international line. Today this policy comes directly from the I.S.

With the counterrevolutionary destruction of the USSR, the bourgeoisie believes its hands have been freed to unleash a whole series of attacks against the working class and the oppressed, expressed in Europe by the dismantling of the "welfare state" and the reinforcing of the racist Fortress Europe. Yet we are also experiencing a series of defensive struggles by the working class whose scope hasn't been seen since the years 1968-69 (in Italy between 1992 and 1994, or in France with the mass mobilizations and strikes of November-December 1995, demonstrations in defense of the *sans papiers* [undocumented immigrants], against racist laws, and against the fascists of the National Front). In several European countries, the social democrats have been put into office, either alone or in

popular-front coalitions, in order to hold back the mobilizations of the workers and the oppressed and to neutralize and defeat them on the altar of class collaboration.

Currently in France, the reformist mass parties are in the popular-front government with the support of the union federations. All the components of the "far left" of yesteryear want to "help" this bourgeois government of the "plural left," or wish it "success," in the hopes of eventually joining it. For their part, the centrist groups which are sprouting up in various places want to "push" this capitalist government to carry out their reformist "emergency plans" (i.e., they want to beg for some crumbs from it). All of them called to vote for this popular front, or for one or another of its components. Today, as the government launches its uniformed guard dogs against the truckers, against the multi-ethnic youth of the working-class suburbs, and against the unemployed; as it continues to deport immigrants after making police lists of their addresses, vowing to expel more than 100,000; as it maintains the Pasqua-Debré [immigration] laws [introduced by the previous conservative administration], while reinforcing some of their most repressive aspects through the Chevènement-Gigou laws [on immigration and nationality, introduced by the current cabinet], and as it passes its anti-working-class measures of social regression, the situation cries out for the intervention of a party armed with the Trotskyist program in revolutionary opposition to the popular front. But in this situation, the ICL digs itself deeper into its abstentionism.

However, the bankruptcy of the current policy of the ICL didn't appear yesterday. Already in 1996 we saw the expulsion of long-time leading cadres who had fought against an entirely fabricated struggle by the I.S. leading to its revision of the Trotskyist analysis of the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy. The I.S. now says the bureaucracy "led" the counter-revolution in the DDR [East Germany], when in fact the Stalinist regimes capitulated before the imperialist bourgeoisie and its anti-Soviet social-democratic spearhead, paving the way for counterrevolution. These cadres also fought to defend the perspective of a principled fusion with the LQB after a common commitment to fight to drive the police out of the Municipal Workers Union of Volta Redonda in Brazil. These expulsions of Spartacist cadres were aimed at getting rid of an obstacle to placing the ICL on its new centrist course. The fight waged by the comrades of the LQB to oust the cops is an expression of the Marxists' fight for the class independence of the proletariat, while practically all other left organizations support, directly or indirectly, the cops and their "strikes." But in the face of the danger of repression and as the struggle heated up, the International Secretariat of the ICL declared that it wished to "pull our hands out of the boiling water," due to "unacceptable dangers to the vanguard," and ignominiously abandoned this principled class battle while breaking its fraternal relations with the LQB.

Subsequently, the leaders of the ICL have invented a whole panoply of lies and subterfuges to cover their betrayal of this struggle. Today, in the face of escalating repression and attacks against the class-struggle activists in Volta Redonda, amid new judicial proceedings against them by the



L.Y. Leonidov

**V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky celebrating second anniversary of the Russian October Revolution in Moscow's Red Square, 7 November 1919. From David King, *The Commissar Vanishes* (1997).**

popular-front and pro-cop elements, the ICL has vilely attacked the defense campaign of the Brazilian Trotskyist worker militants, seeking to drag them into the mud.

After this desertion from the class struggle in Brazil, a twisting and tortuous centrist course has dominated the ICL, deepening and generalizing as it extends to other aspects of the Spartacist program, intervention and heritage. Thus we saw a revision of the Trotskyist position on permanent revolution. In order to attack the IG on the question of permanent revolution, and to stigmatize it with denying this theory, the international leadership had to rehearse some old Stalinist-Menshevik dishes, declaring that in Mexico and all of Latin America the proletariat and peasantry must fight against remnants of feudalism in the countryside. The leadership of the ICL waged a campaign for a whole year claiming that the IG had renounced permanent revolution, when in reality it was the ICL which had reinterpreted the permanent revolution in saying that it depended on there being remnants of feudalism. In the heat of the factional battle, this position had to be "corrected," [with the ICL leadership] now saying that there are no pre-capitalist remnants in Mexico and Latin America, but without giving any explanation. As the Permanent Revolution Faction noted in a 11 January 1998 letter:

"The point is that this is not a secondary or academic question. The permanent revolution is a central question of Trotskyism. An erroneous conception of permanent revolution can only lead to political disorientation and capitulation before non-pro-

letarian class forces, in Mexico and internationally."

The PRF stressed the fact that "the agrarian revolution, like the other democratic tasks, can only be realized by the seizure of power by the proletariat, drawing in its wake the peasant masses, not in a confrontation with imaginary feudal lords but against the capitalist class power of the bourgeoisie."

Meanwhile, on the eve of the electoral victory of [Cuauhtémoc] Cárdenas in Mexico City, the ICL decided that henceforth there was no popular front around the PRD [Party of the Democratic Revolution] in Mexico, even though the struggle against this popular front had been a position it had upheld for almost a decade. As one could expect, this only added to the general political confusion in the organization internationally. The Mexican section was thus incapable of generating any propaganda regarding those elections. Behind that lay the abstentionist policy which refused to undertake the struggle to break the workers, union and left militants, Indian peasants, women and all the oppressed from this popular front. Denying the existence of this Cárdenas popular front was in fact a refusal to fight the bourgeois nationalists and their shills on the left, and a refusal to struggle to tear the leadership of the working class and the oppressed masses away from them.

Coming one after another, these revisions and "correctives"—on permanent revolution, on the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy, on the popular front—could not hold together without giving them an elaborated revisionist foundation. Thus all the re-



cent incantations in the ICL on the effects of this period supposedly marked by an "historical retrogression in the political consciousness of the working class" went hand-in-hand with liquidating and putting into doubt the role of the party and revolutionary leadership. As Trotsky wrote in 1934, amid a battle in the Trotskyist organization in France, only months after the historic defeat of the proletariat in Germany with Hitler's conquest of power: "It is particularly now that we must put up a pitiless fight against abstract, passive propagandism, against a policy of waiting. Along this line, the differences are certainly differences of principle" ("Summary of the Discussion," August 1934).

Having placed all these questions at the center of the debate in the ICL, the Permanent Revolution Faction fought up to the moment that it was expelled from the LTF. Fleeing from political debate, the international leadership and the majority in the LTF declared explicitly that their tactic would be to seek to "humiliate" and "demoralize" the PRF, resorting to decorating the office of the LTF with multiple photo montages of Stalin and Castro in order to make a lying amalgam between Stalinism and the IG and PRF, even going so far as to add Maoist-style dunce caps in the place of political arguments. It all culminated in meetings with chants for "confessions, confessions," demanding that the PRF declare whether or not it was in contact with the IG. Needless to say, it was a truly pitiful spectacle to see people claiming to be Trotskyists chanting for "confessions." With all that, the majority only succeeded in humiliating itself by teaching cynicism to the membership, and its demoralization is already well under way.

But contrary to the expectations of the ICL leadership and its partisans within the LTF (whom the I.S. had described only a few months ago as "sycophants" who were carrying out a flatly centrist policy), all these measures did not succeed in pushing the members of the PRF into resigning. On the contrary, the PRF energetically defended its principled positions within the organization. Finally, after a pretense of internal debate, the international leadership could no longer tolerate our presence and decided to get rid of the minority with lightning expulsions, seeking to cut its losses and homogenize the ICL around its new liquidationist course. The charge selected was alleged contacts of the PRF with the IG, not bothering about the fact that the I.S. had been brandishing this threat for weeks while saying that it didn't want to take organizational measures "for the moment." This moment came a few days after the LTF conference, when a "control commission" was put together and sought to come into the home of militants of the PRF to make an inspection and interrogate them late at night (11:23 p.m., to be precise). When the PRF members responded that they would present themselves at the office the next day to meet with the control commission, the representative of the leadership announced to them by telephone that five minutes were up and they were expelled.

Even after the fact, in its formal expulsion letter, the leadership pretends that we "precipitated" our expulsion. Nothing could be more ridiculous, since in reality we fought to stay in the organization in order to wage a political struggle that the majority

refused to engage. After several weeks, the majority produced a document that didn't respond to any of our arguments, but which tried instead to pretend that Trotskyist militants of the former colonial countries had capitulated to French chauvinism! The proof? That the PRF declared itself proud of the Trotskyists from France and other countries who carried out a courageous struggle under Nazi occupation to win German soldiers and sailors to the cause of the Fourth International, just as they hailed the heroic struggle of the U.S. Trotskyists imprisoned during the Second World War for their opposition to the imperialist slaughter.

For Trotskyists, discipline is intimately linked to the program. We would like to recall here the declaration made by a spokesman of the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party (SWP) which gave rise to the Spartacist tendency. When the leaders of the RT had been suspended from the SWP and were threatened with expulsion, the RT spokesman declared: "We put forward...the proposition that discipline stems not from the organizational form of a party but from programmatic principles of the Fourth International. Again in Trotsky's words, 'The International is not at all a form as flows from the utterly false formulation of the Independent Labor Party. The International was first of all a program and a system of strategic, tactical, and organizational methods that flow from it'" (*Marxist Bulletin* No. 4, Part 2).

We are loyal to the program of the Fourth International of Trotsky, and to the revolutionary continuity represented by more than three decades of struggle of the Spartacist tendency, the program and tradition which the leadership of the ICL is in the process of abandoning. We have been and remain disciplined in relation to this program, and it is this discipline which led us to consider the positions of the IG, to proclaim our faction and to undertake a struggle in the ICL. The flagrant indiscipline with respect to this program is the liquidationist and self-destructive political course on which the I.S. has engaged the ICL. The I.S. has shown itself incapable of carrying out a principled class battle, not to mention leading the socialist revolution. This is not the road we have chosen. To put an end to capitalism, the need to regroup authentically Trotskyist cadres in a party that is necessarily internationalist, functioning according to the principles of international democratic centralism, is posed today with the same acuteness as it was at the time of the foundation of the Fourth International 60 years ago.

Despite the triumphalist cries of the world bourgeoisie about the so-called "death of communism," what is dead is Stalinism, that negation and nationalist perversion of communism—which is international in its essence. Communism lives—it lives in the uninterrupted class struggle of the working class and the oppressed; it lives in the program of Lenin, Trotsky and Cannon which the Spartacist tendency defended and which it has begun to abandon and renounce; it lives in the struggles and the program upheld by the IG, the LQB, and the PRF and in the fusion of our organizations which will prepare the ground for the Trotskyist world party of socialist revolution. Forward to reforge the Fourth International!

Permanent Revolution Faction  
Paris, 3 February 1998

# Declaration of International Faction: Permanent Revolution Faction

[translation]

Paris

19 December 1997

## I) The Crisis of the International Leadership

The leadership is to the party what the party is to the class. The recent political fights in the LTF and the developments within most of the sections over the course of nearly two years show that the root of the problem does not lie solely at the level of the leaderships of the national sections. Rather, a growing tendency is taking hold in the leading body of the ICL, the International Secretariat, to turn away from class struggles. It is this course, which is justified by a so-called "historical retrogression in the political consciousness of the workers movement and left internationally" (in the Call for the Third International Conference [of the ICL]), and the ever-shifting line coming out of the I.S. which is behind the evident confusion of the leaderships of the sections and the demoralization of a whole layer of members. Despite its invoking of the "party question," the course of the I.S. has in reality been liquidationist. It extracts the party from the struggle to win leadership of the working class and to be recognized as the champion of all the oppressed layers. This is what we have seen not just in the fights in the French section but also in many other sections, where the consequences of the I.S.'s line have had a profoundly self-destructive effect.

On the eve of the Third International Conference, simply reading the documents of the I.S. mailings shows that many sections of our International are in acute political crisis, and often on the same issues as those which we have seen in the LTF. In addition to the French section, the I.S. itself characterized the German, Australian, Irish and Mexican sections as centrist or afflicted by centrism. At the same time, a not insignificant number of experienced cadres have quit the party. The call for the Third International Conference itself states: "The ICL is smaller today than it was at the time of the second international conference five years ago, mainly due to the attrition of experienced cadre who felt used up and without hope." We must ask ourselves: *why* do they have this sense of despair? The reality is that instead of political clarification which provides clear perspectives for struggle, the I.S. has reacted every time by giving directions which contradict themselves every three months, going from frenetic activism to (more frequently) pure and simple abandonment of external intervention, and always laying the responsibility for mistakes on the shoulders of the leaderships of the sections and on the members. It is above all in this line and the unstable policy of the I.S., which by its unpredictable nature hampers Marxist thinking by the leaderships of the national sections, that one should seek the

origin of this demoralization of long-time cadres.

The fights in the LTF over the last period concerned what policy should be pursued by a revolutionary leadership. Let's list some of these fights. Four months ago, the I.S. announced the abandonment in practice of the "*Iskra*"<sup>1</sup> perspective for a struggle to forge the nucleus of a Trotskyist party among North African emigres around an exile press published outside the country. Next came the refusal to put out a leaflet to combat the politics of the centrists who are regrouping around Voix des Travailleurs [VdT—Workers Voice, a group expelled by Lutte Ouvrière in March 1997]. More recently there was the refusal to put out a leaflet to intervene in the explosive truckers strike, the first major struggle confronted by the popular-front government installed in June 1997. In all three cases, we fought against this refusal to intervene, and comrades in the LTF leadership who tried to justify the policy of passivity opposed us. These comrades were characterized by the I.S. itself as centrists and rightists, which is true. But what is striking is that they were inspired by the policy of the I.S. and thought they were carrying out its line. And the I.S. has now made a political bloc with these rightists against our positions. During the plenary meeting of the LTF of 9 November 1997, they voted together for five motions against Djura and Zakaria. Far from this being a rotten bloc between the I.S. and the right wing of the LTF, what this was in fact was *an authentically and deeply centrist bloc* between the I.S., which has boiled down its line, and those whom it calls "sycophants."

The motions from the I.S. meeting of 1 November [1997] speak of the "rapid disintegration" and "centrist adaptation of the LTF," and once again we agree with this judgement. The I.S. finds the root of this disintegration and adaptation solely in the French section, which has, certainly, shown the symptoms of this pathology for quite some time. We have sought to combat this. At other times, the I.S. fought against these tendencies to slide into centrism. That was the case in 1992 and again in December 1995, when the leadership of the LTF followed an abstentionist policy which led the section to the brink of collapse. But more recently, it is the I.S. itself which is at the origin of these tendencies, which are multiplying almost everywhere in the International.

Let's draw a quick balance sheet of the judgements of the I.S. itself concerning the present state of the ICL. Thus the Australian section had to have at least four emergency plenary meetings and conferences in less than a year. In the emergency meeting of the SL/A [Spartacist League/Australia] of 21 April 1997, the section was characterized as having "ceased to be motivated by the Trotskyist program and principles" and as

<sup>1</sup> Name of the newspaper, published in exile, that Lenin used to forge the nucleus of the Bolshevik Party in Russia.



Leon Trotsky

adapting to the pressures of social democracy. As for the German section, the umpteenth plenum of the SpAD [Spartakist Workers Party of Germany] on 12-13 July 1997 declared that "the slide toward the liquidation of Trotskyism and the role of the vanguard party has not only continued, but has accelerated and deepened. At this point an apparent majority of the CC has become openly centrist." Our Mexican and Irish sections are also in the soup. The GEM [Grupo Espartaquista de México] was characterized as Menshevik, with "its own centrist tendencies" (Barbara F., 14 June 1997) and it was said that the "political disorientation of the GEM led to the organizational incapacity of generating any propaganda prior to the elections" (Parks, 21 July 1997). As for the DSG [Dublin Spartacist Group], there was "a general collapse in the collective" and it was very soft in the face of the anti-drug campaign of Militant (now the Socialist Party) which in the first instance targets Travellers [nomadic Irish families]. And even the Italian section, which has intersected developments inside RC [the Party of Communist Refounding], has been characterized as showing "very worrisome signs of the section's adaptations to the pressures of its own national terrain."

Now let us look at a fact without precedent in the entire history of the ICL: never before have we seen as in the past two years members of several sections working during a strike. Our International is known for our opposition to crossing picket lines. So why this repeated and stubborn abandonment, by long-time cadres, of what has been a point of pride of the ICL and one of our trademarks? Of course, there is a layer of comrades which has for many years been subject to the pressures of their milieu, often skilled workers. But there is also the policy of the leadership toward these comrades. The case of Herbert B. in the SpAD

was the most egregious, since the section—on the I.S.'s recommendation—couldn't expel him because a part of the SpAD leadership was complicit in the scab role played by this ex-member, and the I.S. was "happy" that he quit. The same thing happened last year in the SL/A. The I.S. conciliates rightist elements right up to the point when they go too far.

All in all, it's not just the sections which are in crisis but the ICL itself. Taking an overview of all these seemingly isolated cases, one is compelled to ask the question: Why these repeated manifestations of centrist adaptation in the different sections of our International? For a Marxist, it is impossible to believe that these repeated symptoms of the same sickness can be explained by pointing only to national or particular problems of the section in question. While recognizing the weakness and the multiple mistakes committed by the LTF leadership, we must frankly say that the most rightist elements whom we have fought and who bitterly attacked us were almost always supported by the I.S. and believed that they were loyally interpreting the line of the I.S. Thus our own experience along with our thoughts about the multiple crises which have shaken other sections have led us to a deeper study of the policy followed by the International Secretariat itself during the recent period.

To come back to the sentence at the beginning of this document, the I.S. wants us to believe that the roots of these multiple deviations are to be found solely in the weaknesses of the sections of the ICL. It paints a picture of the International in which almost all the sections outside of the SL/U.S. are plagued by or have gone over to centrism, with the I.S. constantly intervening to correct them. But from all the evidence, these drifts in the sections are an expression (even a deformed expression) of policies whose origins are to be found in the I.S. itself. To claim the contrary, as the I.S. does, is a variant of the thesis fought by Trotsky in his article "Class, Party and Leadership" [1940] that the defeat in Spain was the product of the "false policy of the masses," when in reality the problem was *the leadership*.

In the I.S. motion of 1 November 1997 on the LTF, the French leadership is accused of "dim disobedience" that was "masking political opposition in the LTF leadership to directives from the I.S." There actually was something of this sort, but in fact it was the dim and unthinking *obedience* of the central core of the leadership of the LTF which explains their inability to follow on time the turns of the weathervane of I.S. directives. They are always one step behind, they zig when they should be zagging. Another curiosity: in her report of 17 October on the LTF, Parks complains that the Central Committee is full of "sycophants." But it should be noted that sycophancy is a two-way, vertical relationship. It can't exist at the base without being encouraged from the top. We see the leadership criticizing its subordinates for behaving as though they were part of a bureaucracy. Where did they learn such behavior?

You don't have to go far to discover the origins. Just look what happened when Djura proposed that the LTF put out a leaflet on the truckers strike. At first they said that the question would be discussed in a meeting on the weekend. But after a youth meeting where many comrades were favorable to having a leaflet, the I.S. immediately reacted by sending no less than four

leaders of other sections to fight the enemy within. A. arrived saying that it was necessary to "clean out" this "shit." The I.S. sounded the alarm internationally, calling upon the members of all the sections to take a stand on (i.e., against) the document of Djura and that of Zakaria. After this call to open fire against what was seen as a deep-going opposition, no less than 15 (fifteen) documents arrived in the record time of two days. Then, in the meeting of 9 November 1997, a total of five motions were voted against Djura and Zakaria. To tighten its vise and to try to divert the debate by inventing an economist danger, the I.S. consciously lies about what its position was. And all this because...we proposed to put out a leaflet on the truckers strike to fight the popular front and thus correct the bad positions of the I.S.

What can one say of a leadership that complains that a majority of its sections are centrist? What is one to say of a leadership which reacts in this way, throwing up a barrier of thin-skinned and scarcely political hostility against a call to correct the policy followed by the I.S., which this time was calling for the same abstentionist policy as that of the former CC of the LTF during November-December 1995? What is the I.S. afraid of? It is obvious that its policy in France today is the continuation and the reflection of the line adopted by the I.S. in 1996 in relation to Brazil. In this regard, after having studied these events and having evaluated them in the light of the latest fights in France, we will analyze later on in this document the meaning of the I.S.'s flight from the class struggle in Brazil.

For us as Leninists, the party must be built from the top down. From this perspective an examination of the facts subjected to a materialist analysis indicates to us that in the ICL as elsewhere, the rot begins from the head. That is why we *declare the Permanent Revolution Faction* to combat the present leadership of the ICL, which has embarked upon a centrist course that threatens to dig the grave of the revolutionary program defended by the Spartacist tendency for three decades. At most the I.S. wants to preserve this program as a museum piece while it begins to deform it on a series of important questions and refuses to carry out the Leninist-Trotskyist program as a guide to action in the struggles of the workers and oppressed.

We will take up these questions below. But we begin by drawing the lessons of the latest fights in the LTF which set off this explosion of internal political battles. As James P. Cannon said, Bolshevik cadres are forged in the struggle around defense of the revolutionary program against all those who would distort it or turn away from it. In the same book, *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, where he talks about the fight against the petty-bourgeois opposition in the SWP in 1939-40, he also remarks that: "The tendency is very strong in all isolated groups to console themselves with the monotonous repetition of adherence to great principles without seeking ways and means and new opportunities to apply them."

## II) The LTF: A Clinical Case of the Bankrupt Policy of the I.S.

The collapse of the entire French leadership at the time of the big demonstrations and strikes in 1995 did not come out of a clear sky. This was not the first time this occurred. We recall that

in 1992, the leadership of the LTF ordered a member, who had been politically active at his workplace, to stop intervening in a struggle which had been undertaken by his co-workers, who saw him as their leader. This provoked a very sharp fight at the Second International Conference. In France in 1995, the leadership followed an abstentionist policy whose bankruptcy was all too obvious. The class struggle had posed a severe test for the French section and the leadership failed miserably. But where was the debate about this failure without parallel in the history of the ICL? Aside from an emergency conference [of the LTF], this merited only a few lines in the January 1996 I.S. report to the IEC [International Executive Committee], and no serious discussion in the plenary session [of the IEC].

The IEC Memorandum of January 1996 did not provide any perspective for external intervention. The only perspective was to have a series of internal classes. This tendency toward abstentionism was present in the LTF which, at the time of the December 1995 strikes, demonstrated passivity and showed that the tendency toward abstention had actually become a program which led the French section of the ICL to the brink of collapse. The LTF retreated into its shell and ceased to be an active political factor in the left.

Why, two years later, does this abstentionist tendency dominate the LTF? In every case, the CC of the LTF tried to interpret the directives of the center, sometimes throwing itself into frenetic activism without any strategy, and then burying itself in internal work. The idea that M. [then convenor of the LTF Central Committee] has a difference with the I.S. on the party question, as Parks says, is ridiculous. M.'s line has been to always impose the line of the I.S., most often bureaucratically, particularly when she did not understand it. She only failed to understand that the new policy of the leadership consists of sudden, abrupt turns and not a coherent line.

The concept of a universally reactionary period has been stressed and repeated insistently. This is the main theme of the Call for the Third Conference. If this conception were true, then France should be the country par excellence where this theory would apply, as well as the perspective that flows from it. Long considered the classical European country of revolution, France had one of the largest CPs and most pro-Soviet proletariats in the world. If the theory and perspectives of the leadership of our International were correct, one would expect that France would suffer particularly acutely from this terrible reactionary period and from the historic regression in consciousness that the I.S. has observed around the world. In fact, the I.S. warned the French section against exaggerating the implications of the militant truckers strike last year [1996]. That warning fits right in with the scandalous collapse of the LTF leadership in the strike wave of 1995, as well as the resistance to intervening in many actions in defense of immigrants, the most recent being in October, as Parks herself pointed out.

This defeatist and abstentionist viewpoint being taught by the I.S. has found good pupils in the LTF leadership. That is why the absurdity of this theory, this vision and this perspective is revealed with particular acuteness in France. The viewpoint of the I.S., far from explaining what is going on in the

world, only *disarms* those who seek to intervene to change the world. Because it is wrong and defeatist, it leads to confusion, disorientation and demoralization. The I.S. complains that many long-time cadres have concluded that the program and the party have no chance of changing the world at this time. But that is what the I.S. teaches. The results are shown not only in long-time members quitting in several sections—including many local leaders in several sections—but also in the political positions taken in France, not only concerning France itself but also toward North Africa and other questions.

By acting in this way, the LTF is simply translating into practice, in French political conditions, the *defeatist* political line put forward by the international leadership. Of course, it would be grossly false to deny that the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state was a historic defeat for the world proletariat, or to deny that in France the fascists have made inroads into certain layers of the working class who supported the Stalinists in the past. However, France is one of the places where the *unevenness* of this period—in which the offensive of the bourgeoisie has been met with important explosions of struggle—has shown itself most clearly.

Parks reports that there was a “raging discussion in the LTF as to whether or not there had been a radicalization” in France. Yet in denying that there was one, the leaders of the LTF could only think that they were supporting the position of the I.S. After all, if this is a deeply reactionary period of defeats, how could there be such a radicalization in a country that is so important for the international class struggle? Since the leadership of the LTF confidently repeats everything that the I.S. tells it, it was logical that this leadership would try to minimize the possibilities of radicalization in France, to minimize the potential for interest in the Trotskyist program, to minimize the potential for recruitment, and in fact to act as an obstacle to bringing the Trotskyist program into the class struggle.

The international leadership concluded that France was becoming radicalized because, in spite of the passivity of the section, many youth came to a public forum of the LTF. The major events of the class struggle—the enormous strike wave of 1995, the mobilizations in defense of the “*sans papiers*” in which sections of the working class demonstrated shoulder to shoulder with immigrants in the summer of 1996, the truckers strike of autumn 1996, the hundreds of thousands of people demonstrating against the Debré laws [on immigration] in February 1997, and the demonstrations against the National Front—these did not lead it to such conclusions. Is this “pronounced leftward movement” in France that the I.S. noted compatible with the worldview the I.S. insists on? No, it is not. But since political consistency is the least of its concerns, the I.S. has made no attempt to explain the contradiction.

The LTF leadership’s resistance to contacting and recruitment has been commented on in motions and documents. But we must ask the question: why such resistance? This reflects the fact that the leadership of the section has arrived at the conclusion that the Trotskyist program is not relevant to today’s struggles. Hence they don’t think that people could be interested in our program. They express a defeatist position which



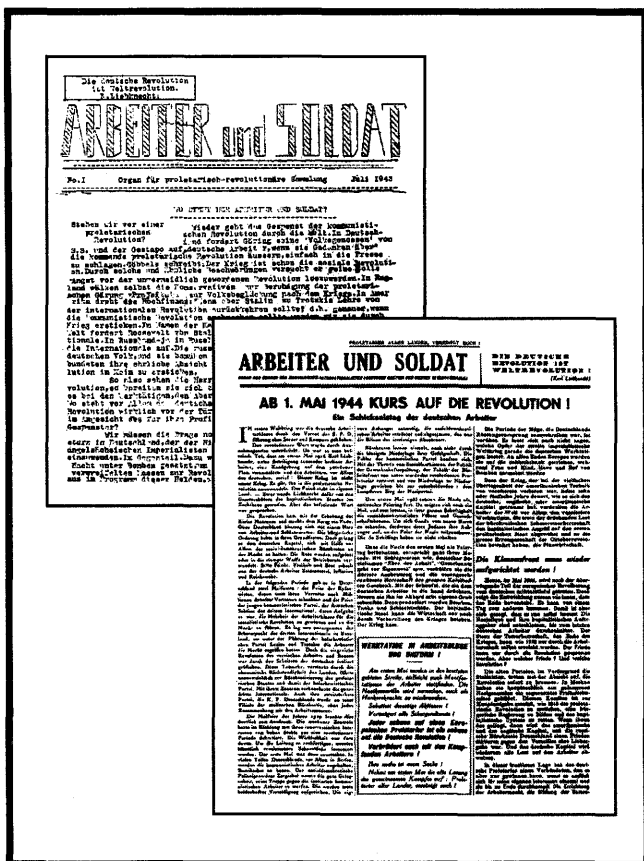
Issues of French Trotskyist paper put out illegally both under the Nazis and under Allied imperialist “liberators.”

goes together with a perspective of historical pessimism. In practice, they act as if communism “is dead,” as the propagandists of the bourgeoisie say. This obstacle to recruitment was fought head-on by Zakaria, as shown by his document of 12-17 October 1997.

But let’s go back to the remarks by the I.S. concerning sycophancy and supposed dim disobedience by the CC of the LTF. Are stubborn passivity, disorientation and toadyism just particular traits or personal sins—or a national “trait” (symptom of a “French disease”)? Or do they have deeper *political* roots? The answer is obvious for anyone who thinks about these political questions. These are the political symptoms and results of a *political line*. And this line was not invented by the leaders of the LTF, even if certain members of the CC (especially HF) were in perfect agreement with this line for their own rightist reasons. The leaders of the LTF simply showed that they were very good pupils of this line—too good, in fact!

Sycophants and toadies will never lead a revolution, or to put it differently, toadyism is counterposed to revolutionary leadership. Thus the present toadyism is the natural product and *political* symptom of the political degeneration coming from the top of the organization. Now the I.S. presents itself as a naive sorcerer’s apprentice who doesn’t know what is going on and what he unleashed. When the I.S. screams today that there is a danger of dissolution of the French section of the ICL, or of the





**Issues of *Arbeiter und Soldat* (Worker and Soldier), clandestine publication put out by French Trotskyists and others appealing to German soldiers and sailors during World War II. Dozens of Trotskyists, both French and others, who were involved in this internationalist work were assassinated by the Gestapo in 1944. ICL claims hailing these heroes is "capitulating to French chauvinism."**

Australian and Irish sections, or the German section, this is the fruit of its own policy. Nelson writes: "In a programmatic sense the leadership [of the LTF] has already effectively dissolved as an instrument of Trotskyism." Yes, indeed, but as the saying goes, "the fish rots from the head." And in classical bureaucratic fashion, it tries to put the blame on its subordinates.

Nelson repeats a correct point on the importance of the revolutionary continuity represented by Cannon, the absence of this tradition among the petty-bourgeois leadership of the French Trotskyist movement (i.e., people such as Naville, Molinier, Frank and others) and the frustration which resulted from the efforts to cohere a collective leadership in the pre-war French movement.<sup>1</sup> However, his statement that "our French section can find little inspiration in the sordid history of French Trotskyism" is one-sided and an example of national narrowness. It is the heroic French Trotskyists who published *Arbeiter und Soldat* [Worker and Soldier]<sup>2</sup> and who recruited German soldiers during the Second World War, who published leaflets saying "Long Live the Red Army" while fighting for political revolution in the USSR and against the chauvinist poison of the PCF expressed in the slogan, "*A chacun son boche*" ("Everyone get a Kraut"), who

conducted agitational work among the forced laborers, who not only before but also after "Liberation" put out their own newspapers underground, and who carried out work on a large scale among Vietnamese workers in France (in contrast to the shameful abandonment of Vietnamese Trotskyists by Pablo and Lambert). It is true that there was considerable disorientation among the French Trotskyists even during their best work during the Second World War, but this kind of blanket condemnation by Nelson is a pure and simple liquidation of the history of the Trotskyist movement.

### III) I.S. Policy toward the Truckers Strike: Left Phrasemongering and Rightist Leavening

What was the *casus belli* that unleashed the latest fight in the LTF? It was Djura's document criticizing the refusal of the I.S. to put out a leaflet to intervene in the truckers strike, and in particular its refusal to raise supposedly "tactical" slogans such as "extend the strike." After that, the I.S. wanted to shift the ground. One of the five motions against Djura and Zakaria, dictated directly by the I.S. during the LTF meeting of 9 November 1997, pretends that the motion and document by Zakaria are "politically dishonest" and that "the dispute with Djura...is not 'for or against a leaflet' but revolutionary Marxism vs. economism." No, it is the I.S. which is politically dishonest, which consciously lies and seeks to change the terrain. Everyone in the LTF knows that the I.S. opposed putting out a tract "because of the political state of the section." This was reported by Lisa G. after her call with Jon B. Later, when Djura protested against this, Lisa tried to cover for the I.S., saying that this only involved Jon B. Moreover, it is not true that the LTF as a whole was abstentionist toward the truckers strike. Zakaria raised the question of having a leaflet and most of the youth were in favor of that. Now the I.S. tries to cover its actions by fabricating a discussion "against economism"—but in order to do so, they have had to redefine economism to identify it with any intervention in economic struggles.

Djura and Zakaria called for a leaflet posing the question of defense of immigrants. Yes, for the extension of the strike which had been attacked by the fascists, for workers defense groups against the fascists, for strike committees which is a key demand of the Transitional Program *against* the popular-front bureaucrats. It is incredible that the I.S. and its spokesman aggressively *opposed* this demand, i.e., they were content to leave the strike in the hands of the bureaucrats. Yes, for a workers government and the socialist United States of Europe, for a revolutionary party—points which are key to introduce revolutionary consciousness from the outside, as Djura wrote

<sup>1</sup> James P. Cannon (1890-1974), one of the founders of the Communist Party of the U.S., who became the founder of American Trotskyism and close collaborator of Trotsky. Pierre Naville, Raymond Molinier and Pierre Frank were leaders of the French Trotskyist movement who were sharply criticized by Trotsky. Pierre Frank later became one of the main leaders of Pabloism.

<sup>2</sup> Worker and Soldier: German-language Trotskyist paper published in France under the Nazi occupation and directed at winning German soldiers and sailors to the Fourth International.



**French truckers confront a squadron of paramilitary riot cops dispatched by Popular Front government to break up blockades on highway near Spanish border on first day of strike last November.**

in her document of 5 November. But the I.S. wants to reduce the intervention of revolutionaries to "selling subscriptions" to strikers, claiming any other attitude would be "economism" and "spontaneism." "First we have to build the party, later on we will go intervene in the struggles," they say in substance. Let's study this more closely.

The motions adopted in the meeting characterize us as "economists." But what is economism? In *What is To Be Done?* Lenin pointed out that Martynov, the leader of the economist current in Russian social democracy, said that the task of the social democrats consisted of "lending the economic struggle itself a political character." Lenin's point was that the task of revolutionaries was to introduce revolutionary consciousness from outside the sphere of relations between workers and bosses, i.e., from the sphere of relations of all the classes and layers of society among themselves and with the state. In this vein, he said that "To bring political knowledge to the workers the Social-Democrats must go among all classes of the population; they must dispatch units of their army in all directions." And as he mentioned: "Social-Democracy leads the struggle of the working class, not only for better terms for the sale of labour-power, but for the abolition of the social system that compels the propertyless to sell themselves to the rich." Never, not in *What Is To Be Done?* nor elsewhere, does Lenin say that Marxists should not seek to present a program for economic struggles. He said that the task of the communists was to lead the class struggle "not only" for economic struggles, but to lead it toward socialist revolution in addressing every form of oppression endured by other social layers among the people.

The purpose of leading all these struggles is to introduce revolutionary consciousness, to increase the degree of organization, self-confidence, strength and experience of the proletariat to prepare it for socialist revolution. What the I.S. calls economism is in fact a redefinition of economism, as if this referred to any intervention to raise slogans and a program in economic struggles. And this redefinition is not in accordance with the writings of Lenin and Trotsky.

For example, in the Transitional Program, Trotsky wrote: "The Bolshevik-Leninist stands in the front-line trenches of all kinds of struggles, even when they involve only the most modest material interests or democratic rights of the working class." The popular front is in

office in France today. Their job is to act as the firemen to put out the fires of working-class militancy. Thus they try to extinguish any explosion of serious class struggle. That is why the Jospin government was put there. That's why they have a "Communist" transport minister. The mass workers organizations are subordinated to the class-collaborationist program through the popular front. In a note by Jim [Robertson] and in the I.S. motion of 28 June 1997, the coming to power of the Jospin popular front is presented as an indication of a movement toward the left, which is only partially correct. In reality, the victory of the popular front also and above all represents an answer by the bourgeoisie and the reformists to the danger of radicalization of the working class, youth and immigrants, i.e., a means for keeping them subordinated to the bourgeoisie. And this can be seen not only in France, but in Italy as well. It is precisely in the workers struggles that we find the first opportunities to intervene to break the workers and oppressed from their treacherous leaders and to rip them from the bourgeois stranglehold of the popular front. But the I.S. doesn't want that—according to it, this is economism.

To fight against the popular front, we have to know how to intervene in mass struggles in order to transform them into a fight against this bourgeois political formation. Is that economism? No. At the time of the June 1936 strikes which shook the inauguration of the popular-front government of Léon Blum, Trotsky wrote that "Bolshevism, which appears to be sectarianism to philistines of all descriptions, in actual fact unites ideological irreconcilability with the greatest sensitivity with regard to movements of the masses." Trotsky insisted that "Ideological irreconcilability itself is nothing else than the purging of the consciousness of the

advanced workers of routine, inertia, irresoluteness, i.e., the education of the vanguard in the spirit of the boldest decisions, preparing it to participate in the relentless mass struggle" ("New Revolutionary Upsurge and the Tasks of the Fourth International," July 1936). This is Trotsky speaking and not some vulgar economist.

Twice in the five motions against Djura and Zakaria voted at the LTF meeting of 9 November 1997, the I.S. pretends that our documents only called for the extension of the strike and for the election of strike committees. In order to set up its house of cards of a struggle against economism, the I.S. lies not only about what its position was but also about ours. Is it economist to say that our party should publish a leaflet in the midst of the first important strike under the popular-front government, calling on the workers to elect strike committees, to extend the strike to the railroads, to air transport and to the automobile factories, to defend the "*sans papiers*," to build workers defense groups to defend strike pickets against the fascist thugs and state repression, all the while explaining the need for a revolutionary party to lead the struggle for socialist revolution? That is what we called for. To claim that this is economism is to mock the Transitional Program. Must we quote the Transitional Program where it calls for such measures?

Calling this economism also makes a mockery of past struggles of the ICL. What about the British miners strike of 1984-85? Didn't the ICL call for a "triple alliance" of the coal miners, railway workers and dock workers? Was that economism? The fact is that the danger of economism is being waved about here to justify a policy of not seeking to intervene in the truckers strike with slogans directly concerning the struggle in which they are engaged. This policy is wrong. It is not in accordance with *What is To Be Done?* It is not in accordance with the Transitional Program. It is not in accordance with the policy of the ICL in the past, and it should not be the policy of the ICL today, neither in France nor internationally.



AFP

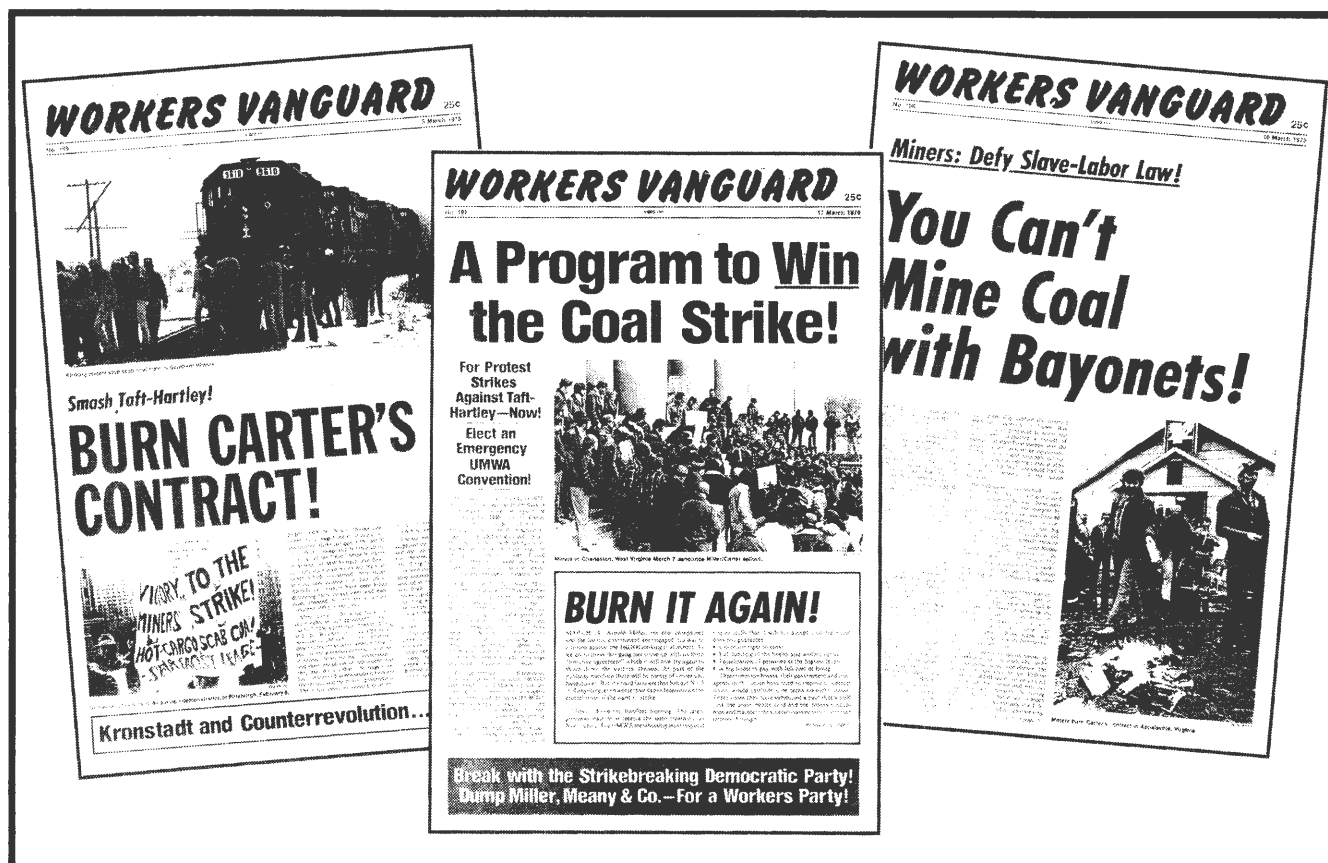
**Class collaborators: Communist Party leader Robert Hue (left) with PCF ministers J.-C. Gayssot and Marie-George Buffet.**

After attacking Djura's document as centrist—or left-centrist, since the I.S. had already declared the majority of the LTF leadership to be centrist—for proposing to intervene in the truckers strike, Parks said, well, when we presented such tactics in the past we did it "seriously," we did it on the basis of a concrete knowledge of the industry and we proposed things which really had a chance of winning. Good. We are very serious too. What about knowledge of the industry? Obviously the LTF does not have a truckers fraction. But let's ask this question: during the 1981 PATCO strike in the United States, did the SL/U.S. have a fraction of Machinists; or in the British miners strike, did the SL/B have a miners fraction or railway fraction? We don't think that we did, at least we have never heard of it. But this did not stop us from putting forward tactical calls to shut down the airports, for a triple alliance, etc. In the bound volumes of *Workers Vanguard* for the years 1978 and 1979, one can read articles on the strike of the coal miners which are filled with slogans for giving direction to the strike and fighting the trade-union bureaucracy. Did the SL have a coal miners fraction at the time?

And it is not true that we don't know anything about France. There were very strong ties between the truckers and the railroad workers in last year's strike, at Rouen for example, where we have a local. During the last strike, the truckers put up a barricade right in front of the Renault [auto] plant in Douai. Workers from that plant even lent the strikers a hand in setting up their barricade. Extension of the strike was not at all a crazy or impossible demand. It was something real. What was necessary was political clarity on the nature of the popular-front government, and it was our job to explain this to the advanced sections of the working class.

In her document, Parks claims that Djura's document makes a cult of spontaneity, or that revolutionary consciousness will arise without the intervention of the revolutionary party. In her document, Djura stresses the opportunity to "bring the revolutionary program into the class struggles" in order to "bring the Trotskyist program into the working class." It speaks of the "burning need to bring revolutionary consciousness into the sectors which are in struggle." Zakaria's document also speaks of this need, insisting on "our fight to bring revolutionary consciousness into the proletariat and other layers in order to win the elements who are seeking a class alternative over to the urgent necessity of building a revolutionary party."

It's true that we also put forward slogans directly concerning the conduct of the strike and the steps which the strikers should undertake, precisely in order to show in practice the role of the union bureaucracies and of the popular-front government. Is that a crime? Let's read what the founding conference of the Fourth International said in its "Resolution on the Tasks of the French Section": "As a matter of fact, Bolshevism's superiority over Menshevism lies not only in the correctness of its policy but also in its ability to bring an organization to share the revolutionary struggles of the



ICL today argues against PRF that Trotskyists only raise demands in strikes where they have a fraction in the industry. Yet in 1977-78 U.S. coal strike, WV correctly raised strike demands week after week.

proletariat. Bolshevism is genuinely infused with the Marxian spirit contained in the well-known formula: it's not enough just to explain the world; one must change it." After noting the retreat and declining membership of the POI (the French section [of the Fourth International in 1938]), the resolution comments: "It cannot be explained away solely on the grounds of the objective situation: 'sacred union' [of all the parliamentary parties], war, the failure and disillusionment which produce in the toiling masses a distrust toward attempts at labor organization and the party's general activity." And then it criticizes the POI for "the lack of agitation, propaganda, and action concentrated on decisive points."

The list of distortions and falsifications by the I.S. gets longer all the time. Thus we did not attack the subscription drive, and we did not counterpose the leaflet to the sub drive. We are for selling subscriptions to the press, which should be accompanied by propaganda aiming specifically at bringing the party's program into this key class struggle. Obviously, writing a leaflet does not at all mean that the entire LTF should stay in the office. We need reports from the picket lines to write an effective leaflet, in order to address the arguments and illusions that the comrades encounter there. Trotsky has a very powerful passage in "What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat" (January 1932) which we believe should guide us:

"But the proletariat moves toward revolutionary consciousness not by passing grades in school but by passing through

the class struggle, which abhors interruptions.... The identity, in principle, of the interests of the proletariat and the aims of the Communist Party does not mean either that the proletariat as a whole is, even today, conscious of its class interests, or that the party under all conditions formulates them *correctly*. The very need for the party originates in the plain fact that the proletariat is not born with the innate understanding of its historical interests. The task of the party consists in *learning*, from experience derived from the struggle, how to demonstrate to the proletariat its right to leadership."

It is downright absurd to claim that calling to extend the truckers strike and to draw the class line against the popular-front government is in some way a capitulation to the popular front and "tailing after the popular front." Everything is stood on its head. Opposing such a leaflet is what constitutes a danger of capitulation to the popular front and its centrist tails. As Djura wrote, the position of the I.S. corresponds to the passivity of rightist elements in the leadership of the LTF. Nor is it true that the centrists' leaflets called for similar slogans. They called to pressure the popular-front government and they were explicit about that. We want to mobilize the working class against the popular-front government and build a revolutionary party to lead this struggle.

Djura and Zakaria declared that the problems were not limited to France, but affected all the sections, one after another, and in fact that these are international problems. It was



the ICL as a whole that needed a correct intervention into this strike by a key sector of the workers in the face of a popular-front government. Drawing the lessons of this fight to break with the popular front was an international task. But the fire was directed *against* those who really fought for an active revolutionary intervention.

The following was written on "tactics" toward struggles and strikes of the working class:

"For a Communist Party there is never a situation in which political activity is impossible.... However weak a party is, it can always turn big political events or large-scale strikes which shake the entire economic life of the country to its advantage by organizing and carrying out systematic and practical propaganda.... Party orators must explain how the Communist slogans point the way to overcoming the difficulties.... Depending on the situation, we can get across our action slogans to the sections of workers most concerned by using posters and small-format leaflets or by distributing a more detailed leaflet that explains Communist ideas and shows how they are linked to the problems at hand and the slogans of the day."

The authors of this document even say: "Communists make a *grave mistake* if they stand back *passively*, are scornful of or oppose the day-to-day struggle of the workers for small improvements in the conditions of their life on the grounds that they have a Communist programme and that their final goal is armed revolutionary struggle." These same authors insist that it is only "by means of such day-to-day grass-roots work and by constant and full commitment to participation in all the struggles of the proletariat that the Party can become a truly *Communist party*" and that it will "mark itself off from the obsolete Socialist Parties whose activity is confined to abstract propaganda, recruiting work, talking about reforms and exploiting the 'possibilities' of parliament."

Is this economism? No, it comes from the famous resolutions of the Third Congress of the Communist International on "The Organizational Structure of the Communist Parties, the Methods and the Content of Their Work" adopted by the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky in 1921. QED.

#### IV) The I.S. Revises the Lessons of the 1995 Struggles and the Intervention of the ICL to Justify Its Current Abstention

After presenting a veritable redefinition of economism, the I.S. attempted to revise the history of our intervention into the 1995 strike wave in France. The fact is that the LTF called several times for the extension of the strike to the private sector. Here is what the *Le Bolchévique* supplement of 4 December 1995 says, under the title "For a New Revolutionary Leadership!": "It is crucial to extend the strike to other sectors, especially the bastions of industrial workers, where immigrant workers are a strategic component—time and again, the lack of leadership to generalize and link up workers' struggles has allowed the bourgeoisie to isolate combative sectors and suppress the workers' militancy." Today, the I.S. would say that this article is "spontaneist" because it talks of workers' militancy!

Here is the main title of the *leaflet* of the LTF of 14 De-

**Ta Thu Thau, Vietnamese Trotskyist leader, was recruited to Fourth International in France.**



cember 1995: "To Defend and Extend the Strike: Elect Recallable Strike Committees!" This leaflet, as well as the supplement, were written largely by the International Secretariat after the collapse of the LTF Central Committee. We can see now why the I.S. is so intent on reducing our position to these two slogans: *the I.S. is polemicizing against its past!* A. says that the youth have drawn a false lesson from the intervention of the ICL in the 1995 struggles. No, it is the international leadership which now repudiates its own intervention in those struggles, which at the time encountered stubborn and mute resistance on the part of the CC of the LTF. This time it is the I.S. which opposes intervening in this strike which has shaken the country, with slogans to fight the reformist bureaucrats and against the popular front of class collaboration.

It is instructive to understand *why* the propaganda that the LTF finally put out in 1995 stressed the importance of extending the strike. The 14 December 1995 leaflet argued: "As we can see, the refusal of the working-class leaderships to fight against racist terror poses an obstacle to the necessary extension of the struggle mainly to the private and industrial sector, with its large, combative component of workers from North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. Full citizenship rights for everyone here! Down with Vigipirate [the racist "anti-terrorist" army/police sweeps directed mainly against African immigrants and minority neighborhoods]!" Unlike the centrists and anarchists who agitated for a general strike while sweeping the fight against Vigipirate under the rug, we called for mobilizing against Vigipirate and racist terror.

In the plenary meeting of the LTF of 9 November 1997, several interventions, including those of the representatives of the I.S., asserted that if we called for extending the strike in 1995, it was only in order to "fight against chauvinism" and against Vigipirate. But fighting against racist terror is not just a democratic question, it is a strategic question for the revolution. It was the only way to achieve the unity of the proletariat and to reach its immigrant component concentrated in private industry in order to extend the strike. In her letter of 16 August 1997 (adopted by the I.S.), Gordon herself said: "What was the thrust of our supplements during the December '95 public workers strikes?"



**Iskra perspective: Vietnamese Trotskyist newspapers published after World War II in France.**

We pointed out the importance of extending the strike wave to private industry, and insisted that the sellouts who do not fight 'Vigipirate' anti-immigrant state terror don't want to and can't mobilize the industrial proletariat with its heavy component of immigrant workers." It doesn't bother the I.S. to vote for this letter in August and to preach the opposite in November. The I.S. not only falsifies our intervention in December 1995, but even the positions that it adopted itself. The irony is that in both cases it was directed against Djura and Zakaria.

#### V) The Abandonment of the "Iskra" Perspective

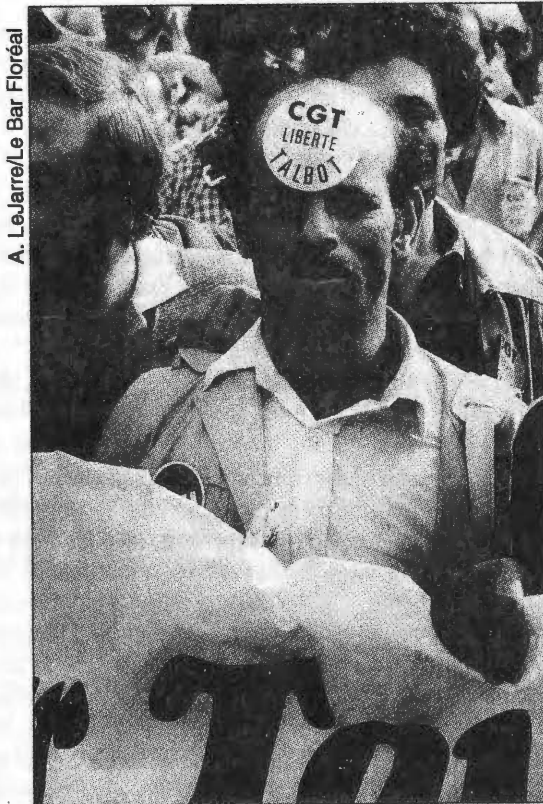
It is in this framework of a generalized crisis of the ICL that the flinch occurred on the "Iskra" perspective for Algerian exiles, or more precisely the abandonment of this perspective which was one of the points of agreement at the time of the recruitment of the TPT [Transitional Program Tendency of the Algerian PST (Socialist Workers Party), section of the late Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat (USec)] to the ICL in 1992-93. It is striking to read in the Call for the Third International Conference the following sentence: "The impact of Islam as a political factor also contributed to closing ICL perspectives for work in North Africa as discussed in the Algeria Commission at the 1992 Second International Conference of the ICL." To claim that we simply decided to "close" the work in North Africa in the discussions at the Second Conference is to completely deform an aspect of the content of these discussions. We talked, of course, of the ques-

tion of leaving the country because of the terror of the Islamic fundamentalists and the government forces, but that was combined with the "Iskra" perspective, i.e., of forging a leadership in exile for future revolutionary parties in North Africa, to publish an emigre journal oriented toward North Africa and toward the hundreds of thousands of refugees in exile. When last August we opposed the plan of the I.S. to disperse the comrades in question, emphasizing that this amounted to abandoning in practice an "Iskra" perspective, several of the responses stated that everyone was in agreement with such a perspective, but there was a *but...* The documents gave many reasons why in reality this was impossible. But today in the Call for the Third Conference, there is no longer even a mention of the "Iskra" perspective. It was simply liquidated.

The origin of this abandonment is to be found in the evolution of the policy of the I.S., and hence the fight against these policies must also be waged internationally. This is absolutely not a narrow national struggle, as comrade Gordon characterized the arguments of Zakaria and Djura in her letter of 16 August 1997 when they raised this question. Rather, it is an affirmation of principles which were fundamental to the

founding of the Communist International and the Fourth International. We have fully participated in the internal life of the LTF. Our struggle on this question did not in the least constitute a step back from our involvement in building a French section by struggling against the drift toward centrism of its old leadership. *It represented the continuation of this struggle.* The fight for an "Iskra" perspective to forge an emigre nucleus of North African Trotskyists is an indispensable part of the construction of a truly internationalist French section of a Trotskyist international. A French section which didn't fight to forge a Trotskyist leadership among the millions of emigres and immigrants from the Maghreb [North Africa] in France would not be up to fulfilling its responsibilities.

Furthermore, an international leadership which encourages the lack of this internationalist responsibility, which limits the struggle to a perspective of immigrant work as opposed to a struggle to form Trotskyist parties in North Africa, is abandoning one of the characteristics of Bolshevism, perhaps not consciously at present, but certainly in fact. And there is already a precedent. First in Brazil, there was the abandonment at a crucial moment of the struggle to expel the police from the Municipal Workers Union of Volta Redonda, accompanied by the after-the-fact renunciation of the Declaration of Fraternal Relations between the ICL and Luta Metalúrgica, a shameful flight which we will discuss later in this document. Now, for a second time, the I.S. abandons the struggle concerning a semi-colonial country in



**North African auto worker at Talbot during strikes in mid-1980s.**

renouncing the “Iskra” perspective and the future construction of North African sections of the ICL.

To paraphrase Trotsky, if there is not a real effort to forge Bolshevik parties in the semi-colonial countries, then “the permanent revolution and all the rest would be only a lie.” In France, this is particularly the case regarding the ex-colonies of the Maghreb, which are linked to the former colonial power thanks to a veritable human bridge of millions of immigrant workers and their children. Without this genuine struggle, *permanent revolution* is nothing but a ritual phrase and is turned into its opposite. This is the tendency that we see in the I.S. This is what lies behind the hard *opposition* to concretizing the “Iskra” perspective.

We also wonder what is behind the proposal for an Islamic Commission. The I.S. deliberately distorts the situation to give the image of a population that has been totally won to Islamic fundamentalism. The reality is much more contradictory. There are plenty of examples of opposition to Islamic fundamentalism among the masses, both in the working class (which has waged determined struggles against the IMF [International Monetary Fund] policies of the government as well as against the Islamic fundamentalists) and among women (priority targets of the Islamic fundamentalist cutthroats), in the Berber minority, of course, and also in Arab cities and villages, including some regions which have been the scene of various massacres. The situation is far from promising in the short run, but we can start building in exile an authentically Trotskyist nucleus that must be forged in the struggle against those who soil this banner by betraying its program.

But what is the theoretical and programmatic import of this new line? In his letter to Gordon of 25 August 1997, Jim Robertson commented on “the confusion found at the second congress of the CI [Communist International] on the colonial question.” There was indeed confusion, and this contributed to the wrong line of entering the Guomindang [Kuomintang, or KMT, the bourgeois-nationalist movement led by the militarist Chiang Kai-shek]. But at that congress there was also a social-democratic opposition to the struggle to forge communist parties in the colonies, an opposition which hid behind rhetoric insisting on the need for a proletarian leadership.

With the flight from Brazil now repeated in the abandonment by the I.S. of the “Iskra” perspective for the construction of a North African Trotskyist nucleus in exile, one has to ask: where is this new policy going? There is a great danger that the line of the I.S. will evolve in a direction similar to that of Serrati in the 1920s. At the Second Congress of the Comintern, Serrati abstained on the vote on the theses on the national and colonial question drafted by Lenin and then modified after discussion of the theses presented by M.N. Roy. Serrati’s arguments were supposedly from the left, but in reality they masked a rightist policy of abstention from the struggle to forge communist parties in the colonial countries which fight against imperialism and the local bourgeoisie. Ultimately, this was a capitulation to imperialism and colonialism. According to Serrati, Lenin’s theses contained “certain contradictions but also in particular a grave danger for the position of the communist proletariat in the advanced countries.” Behind the pseudo-left positions of Serrati there hid a social-democratic line of abstaining from the struggle for workers revolution in the countries dominated by imperialism.

Although there were important confusions at the Second Congress of the Communist International, there was a struggle there against the abstentionist policy represented by Serrati. And the main fight was to root out of the parties newly won to the CI their indifferent, at best, or pro-colonial heritage from the social-democratic parties. The famous 21 conditions for joining the Comintern included thesis 8, which demanded: “In countries whose bourgeoisies possess colonies and oppress other nations, it is necessary that the [Communist] parties have an especially clear and well-defined position on the question of colonies and oppressed nations.” In the “Supplementary Theses” written by Roy, which were also approved by the Congress and appended to the “Theses and Additions on the National and Colonial Questions” by Lenin, it was stressed that: “the foremost and necessary task is the formation of Communist parties that will organize the peasants and workers and lead them to the revolution and the establishment of soviet republics.... The Communist parties of each imperialist country must work in conjunction with these proletarian parties of the colonies, and through them give moral and material support to the revolutionary movements as a whole.”

This point was repeatedly emphasized by Trotsky, in *The Third International After Lenin*, and later in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*. In his pamphlet *What Next?* Trotsky writes:

“What characterizes Bolshevism on the national question is

that in its attitude toward oppressed nations, even the most backward, it considers them not only the object but also the subject of politics. Bolshevism does not confine itself to recognizing their 'right' to self-determination and to parliamentary protests against the trampling upon of this right. Bolshevism penetrates into the midst of the oppressed nations; it raises them up against their oppressors; it ties up their struggle with the struggle of the proletariat in the capitalist countries; it instructs the oppressed Chinese, Hindus, or Arabs in the art of insurrection and it assumes full responsibility for this work in the face of civilized executioners. Here only does Bolshevism begin, that is, revolutionary Marxism in action. Everything that does not step over this boundary remains centrism."

This reference is certainly well known in the ICL, but we can see that the I.S. is now abandoning this policy in practice. One of the dubious merits of Gordon's letter of 16 August 1997 is that she clearly says that the role of the leadership is not the construction of a North African Trotskyist nucleus in exile but only immigrant work. She rejects all work directed toward the "demoralized and fetid exile milieu" in order to exclusively address "second generation" youth and "immigrant" workers in strategic industrial sectors. We have always fought to carry out work among these layers, but what Gordon says here is different. Her position comes down to the formula, "immigrants" yes, exiles no. And that not only raises a barrier between these two tasks, but also renounces in practice the struggle to forge communist parties in the semi-colonial countries of North Africa through the recruitment of potential cadres who are presently in exile, above all, but not only, in France. As we stressed in our documents in August, many exiles were won to Communism during their stay in France, such as the Vietnamese Trotskyist Ta Thu Thau.

In her letter of 16 August 1997, Gordon argued flatly *against* carrying out any work among the Algerian political émigrés. It was against the deeply liquidationist substance of these arguments that Djura and Zakaria declared that they had a difference with those who want to abandon the Iskra perspective decided in 1993 and who later opposed putting out a leaflet with slogans concerning the truckers strike, as opposed to those who want to fight to build a genuine Bolshevik party. The Communist International insisted that genuine Communist parties must carry out systematic work toward the colonies (and ex-colonies). As we noted in an earlier letter, the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, in its "Resolution on the French Question," stated:

"The World Congress invites the French party and its Central Committee to pay far more attention and to allot far greater forces and resources than it has up till now to the colonial question and to propaganda in the colonies; and, in particular, to set up a permanent bureau attached to the Central Committee, in charge of the work in the colonies, drawing into this bureau representatives of the native Communist organizations."

In the various documents against our positions, a number of arguments have been put forward. Jim says in his letter to Gordon on 25 August 1997: "What came over from the Algerian PST were unconsolidated and immature fragments. An *Iskra* perspective implies propaganda and some capacity there-

fore to write it, which exists only in potential, not presently. An *Iskra* perspective implies a continuous testing process from a large pool at the bottom and something comparable to the in and out of prison and exile under the tsarist empire."

Thus he rejects the "Iskra" perspective because of (a) the supposed incapacity of the comrades to write, and (b) due to the absence of a large pool comparable to the Russian exile milieu at the turn of the century. First of all, it is ridiculous to say that the comrades don't know how to write at the exact moment when there was a draft article on Algeria and Gordon herself recalled that Djura had contributed to writing "good propaganda." This reminds us of allegations we've heard in the past. In fact, when the TPT wrote its faction platform, someone wondered whether our document wasn't written "in Paris." That someone was Damien Elliott [leader of the Gauche Révolutionnaire, affiliated with Peter Taaffe's ex-Militant tendency, now the Socialist Party].

As to the second reason put forward, it is far from relevant. Even when the large pool of emigres on which the Vietnamese Trotskyist group in France was built shrank considerably after World War II, that did not mean that the Vietnamese Trotskyists should have devoted themselves solely to immigrant work and not to building the nucleus of the Trotskyist party. In fact, one of the first steps in the development of Pabloism, and also of the social-democratization of the anti-Pabloites around Bleibtreu-Lambert, was the abandonment of the Vietnamese Trotskyists (not to mention their support to rival nationalist factions in Algeria).

The point is that abandoning the perspective of building revolutionary nuclei of immigrant workers and exiles from the colonial and semi-colonial countries is one of the first signs of opportunist degeneration in the direction of social democracy in the cases of Serrati, Ledebour and the Pabloites. This danger is posed in the ICL today. There is a tendency to abandon in practice the work of building Trotskyist leaderships in semi-colonial countries, which ultimately has a social-democratic character, as was the case with Serrati. The abandonment of an "Iskra" perspective for North Africa follows the abandonment of the struggle to build a Bolshevik workers party in Brazil.

As we wrote in our answer to Gordon (22 August 1997): "We are in the epoch of imperialism, and there cannot be dissociated national roads to socialism. The struggles in the imperialist powers and in the ex-colonies are interdependent. This is materialized all the more when there is an immigrant proletariat which assures a living link between the imperialist power and its ex-colonies despite the walls of racist fortress Europe."

"Ultimately, denying or underestimating the importance and the necessity of regrouping and integrating cadres from the ex-colonial countries into the Trotskyist sections of their respective colonial powers comes down to a repudiation of permanent revolution and to the negation of the role of the party as an instrument and conscious agent of revolution."

Trotsky wrote in this respect in *The Third International After Lenin*, a fundamental book that we are proud our International published in Russian:

"There were two fundamental propositions in the theory of permanent revolution. First, that despite the historical back-



wardness of Russia, the revolution can transfer the power into the hands of the Russian proletariat before the proletariat of advanced countries is able to attain it. Secondly, that the way out of those contradictions which will befall the proletarian dictatorship in a backward country, surrounded by a world of capitalist enemies, will be found on the arena of world revolution. The first proposition is based upon a correct understanding of the law of uneven development. The second depends upon a correct understanding of the indissolubility of the economic and political ties between capitalist countries."

Right after this hard fight on the question of the "Iskra" perspective toward North Africa, a perspective that was earlier proposed by and is now rejected by the I.S., a new fight arose in the LTF on the draft of an article on Algeria. HF, in particular, criticized (in his document of 3 October 1997) the draft written by Djura as being "the concrete expression of the positions defended by comrades Djura and Zakaria in their recent documents," i.e., reflecting our positions of supposed "national narrowness" which were criticized some weeks earlier by the I.S. HF denounced us for "refus[ing] to recognize that what is happening before our eyes in Algeria is a catastrophe of that scope" (as in Iran). After some time, the I.S. intervened to tone down the discussion and rejected HF's views. But where did he come up with the ideas that he put forward in his document? In her letter of 16 August 1997, Gordon states: "That instead of a revolutionary party emerging...Algerian political life has degenerated into mass bloodletting between these two reactionary 'alternatives' constitutes a profound political defeat." HF thought that he was defending the position of the I.S., which rejects the "Iskra" perspective for Algeria. The source of his ideas was Gordon's letter, for which HF tried to be the most loyal spokesman ("sycophant," in Parks' terms).

Parks complains that there is increasing *cynicism* in the French section toward the leadership of the French section and its relation with the I.S. But now, with complete cynicism, Nelson and Parks *do not say one word about the document written by Gordon*. (This letter isn't even included in the new international bulletin, even though a large part of this bulletin is devoted to the fights in the LTF.) After encouraging rightist elements like HF — and Brunoy, who said that "the Algerian working class is finished, finished" — the I.S. directs an acerbic critique against these terrible positions. The reality is that the membership is taught to be cynical, to pretend that they don't remember, that they cannot see that what was white yesterday is black today. It was probably the disavowal of HF by the I.S. that led him to quit, because he rightly thought that he was following the line of the I.S. But the line of the I.S. now changes in a kaleidoscopic manner, and he did not make the turn in time.

Cynicism is not only taught in the LTF. One has to read Barbara F.'s document ("Centrism and the GEM," 14 June 1997) where instead of presenting political arguments, she responds to hesitant young Mexican comrades by exhorting them to chant in chorus: "Our International, love it or leave it." In this way the representatives of the I.S. have tried to cut off all discussion with ridiculous maxims and an endless torrent of vile slanders. What is one to say, for example, of the very title of Parks' document

against Djura: "Left in Form, Right in Essence"? This is a famous *anti-Trotskyist* Stalinist expression used in the past to accuse the Left Opposition of being disguised social democrats.

## VI) Brazil: Flagrant Case of the I.S. Abandoning the Class Struggle

Regarding Brazil, what comes out clearly is that there was a *betrayal* on the part of the I.S., which deserted from the class struggle after having won the militants of Luta Metalúrgica to constitute themselves as the nucleus of a Trotskyist vanguard party and to begin to fight to expel the cops from the Municipal Workers Union of Volta Redonda (SFPMMVR). LM had agreed to wage this fight from the very first discussion on this subject in London, in January 1996. But the I.S., which was developing a new line, may have thought that it could push a discussion with LM/LQB on the question of the cops in the unions without confronting the concrete consequences, both for the LQB and the ICL, of carrying out this principled and necessary policy in the class struggle. That is, the I.S. acted in a highly irresponsible manner.

No, to go back to Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, it is not enough to interpret the world, it is necessary to change it. And here we have before us one of the crystal-clear characteristics of the centrist course of the international leadership, as was explained by Trotsky in "Centrism and the Fourth International": "Under the pressure of circumstances the eclectic-centrist may accept even the most extreme conclusions only to retreat from them afterwards in practice." The problem for the I.S. is that the LM/LQB members, having been won to this, began to fight to crystallize this program and this agreement. They succeeded in mobilizing sectors of the working class in Volta Redonda, under conditions of real repression on the part of the state and its agents provocateurs in the workers movement. To our knowledge, there is no recent example where the fight to expel cops from a trade union has been waged with such intensity as by the LQB in Volta Redonda.

The insistence of the I.S. in trying to prove that the LQB took the union to court (an insistence which is based on the lies of the LBI and of Artur Fernandes to cover up their dirty work) is a desperate attempt to use any slander and lie launched by the popular front and its agents in the Fernandes group to justify *a posteriori* the I.S.'s abandonment of the principled class battle that was engaged in Volta Redonda. *WV*'s accusations have been refuted by the LQB, which explained that when Geraldo Ribeiro found out about the legal actions wrongly undertaken in his name by the lawyers, he immediately ordered them to stop these actions, which was done. And he categorically refused an offer by the courts to confirm him as president of the union, because he rejected any intervention by the bourgeois justice system in the workers movement, leading to a break with his lawyers. All this took place *several months before* the articles which appeared in *WV*. These facts have been documented by the Internationalist Group with reproductions of material proofs, but the only response of *WV* has been to repeat the slanders taken from the bourgeois press, which is beholden to the steel bosses, and from the pro-cop

elements who in fact hauled the union into the courts. By placing an equal sign between those (the LQB) who have fought to throw the cops out of the union and those (Fernandes & Co.) who defend the cops and brag of being "oriented" by the uniformed thugs of the bourgeoisie, *WV* aids the popular front against the revolutionaries.

Further, the "arguments" now put forward have almost nothing to do with those raised in June-July 1996. At first, these arguments were centered on the accusation that LM/LQB was infected with "trade-union opportunism" and that there was a fundamental difference on the party question, where LM supposedly refused to make the political leap to consolidate the nucleus of a Trotskyist party, that they did not want to put out a newspaper. But these arguments couldn't stand up, because the LM/LQB members were determined to carry out the fight to drive the cops out of the union, to launch their paper, which they published only a few weeks after the break by the I.S. (which claimed they "refused" to publish it), and to recruit from other layers of the oppressed.

So as for what happened in June and July 1996, it is clear that the LQB waged a struggle to expel the cops from the union, and all the facts prove that it was impossible for the I.S. not to have been aware (once again!) of the union general assembly of 19 June 1996 where the question of throwing the cops out was to be debated and voted on. Clippings from the union press of Volta Redonda clearly show what happened. Their union bulletin of 6 May 1996 says: "The Rank and File Is Deciding: Police Out of the Union"; the 13 June MEL leaflet contains a specific point on the municipal *guardas* (cops); another union bulletin dated 18 June 1996 is explicit that "the affiliation of *guardas* and police to workers' unions is incompatible with a class program"—this leaves no margin for maneuvering or feigned ignorance by anyone. It is clear that the I.S. knew, but at that moment it wanted above all to be out of the "boiling water," no matter what the cost, and thus it *betrayed* the principles which it claimed to defend.

Yes, these documents are reproduced in the dossier on Brazil published by the Internationalist Group. Where else could one have found them? Certainly not in *WV* or in the documents circulated by the I.S. At the same time, a union bulletin [of the SFPMVR] dated 17 June 1996 had an editorial on "Capitalist Offensive and Crisis of Leadership," and articles which raised the need to mobilize the workers to throw the cops out of the unions. This is the proof and the reflection of the fact that there was a real nucleus of Trotskyist worker cadres in Brazil, including a sizeable component of black members. The I.S. can play with words and dates in *Workers Vanguard* to deny the struggle to expel the cops, declaring "13 June? 19 June? 25 July?" This attitude is no longer surprising when we know that the I.S. has instilled in a lot of militants the idea that intervening in the unions with a communist program in order to build fractions to wrest the leadership away from the reformists is synonymous with betrayal, fake mass work and economism.

To justify its desertion and its refusal to defend the LQB members under fire from the bourgeois state, the I.S. declares that the dossier published by the IG on repression in Brazil is

nothing but "camouflage," and that "the entire subsequent trajectory of the LQB was predictable, and we did predict it. We warned where their unprincipled combinationism at the top of the union and their recourse to bureaucratic methods against their opponents in the union could lead" (*Workers Vanguard*, 11 July 1997). This declaration tries to whitewash the I.S. by making believe that since LM didn't follow the I.S.'s instructions to "pull their hands out of the boiling water," it is therefore facing repression which it brought upon itself. Thus the victims of state repression who have waged a struggle against state intervention in the unions are presented as maneuvering bureaucrats who are only trying to consolidate their positions at the head of the union. And when in the same article it is stated, "Having taken up this fight, they then tried to use it as a factional club against their rivals for the union presidency," this is also intended to whitewash people like Fernandes and the LBI, presenting them as respectable opponents with whom one can discuss and have relations, as was the case during the last CUT congress in Brazil (see report by S.).

In this framework, a whole piece of history has been rewritten on the question of fraternal relations. *WV* says that "If we had known that this was how LM operated, *there would have been no fraternal relations.*" This is grotesque! The IEC knew that there were cops in the union in January 1996; why were relations not broken at that time? It's simple—this argument was used several months later in order to cover up the fact of the flight by the I.S., which decided that there were "unacceptable risks to the vanguard."

Parks complains that the LTF writes polemics which simply *invent* positions in order to polemicize against them. Nelson repeats that "not being able (or willing) to do real combat they resort to superficial or false polemics." Where could the LTF have learned such a practice? Anyone who can read can see the answer. Over the past year and a half, the ICL press has been full of "polemics" which invent or simply falsify positions of the IG, from ridiculous lies that they are opposed to polemical struggle and support economism to the absurd invention that they reject permanent revolution to the kaleidoscope of slanders against the LQB. If the leadership of the LTF thinks that it is acceptable and even beneficial to write lies, they learned this from their schoolmasters in the I.S.

## VII) The New Line of the I.S. on Mexico: Denial of the Popular Front and Prostration Before the PRD!

If in France the I.S. was dead set against our proposal to intervene in the truckers strike with propaganda which would provide an axis for struggle by the strikers and the advanced elements of the working class to confront and break with the popular front, before that in Mexico the I.S. simply resolved this contradiction by denying that there is a popular front around the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution). The latter had won the post of governor of the federal district (Mexico City), which it has just occupied, and made a strong showing in the chamber of deputies without our Mexican section lifting its little finger. Why fight against the popular front



if the I.S. has decided that it doesn't exist?!

Mexico is another case where the abstentionist policy of the I.S. goes hand in hand with the brazen revision not only of a position defended by the ICL for the last decade, but of elementary principles of the Trotskyist program regarding popular fronts. An I.S. motion of 28 June 1997 declared that: "The IG's formulation that the Mexican Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD)—a bourgeois nationalist party—is a popular front, or in the leadership of a popular front, is false because there is no mass workers party that exists in that country," and because the proletariat "has historically remained subordinate to bourgeois nationalism."

First, to put matters in their proper place, the formulation that the PRD is at the head of a popular front was a unique position of the ICL until quite recently—i.e., for nearly ten years—and one can't dispose of that by trying to impute it solely to the IG, deducing that because the IG defends this point (which moreover is part of the programmatic heritage of the ICL), therefore this point is intrinsically false.

Secondly, it took the I.S. ten years to recognize that there is no mass workers party in Mexico, which certainly gives us an idea of the interest that the current elements of this body pay to what goes on on the other side of the Rio Grande/Río Bravo. And let no one say that for ten years another line was carried because a certain Norden slipped it in, since that is a stupid confession by the rest of the international leadership as if it had been hidden from them (once again) that there was no mass workers party in Mexico! Fortunately, ridicule doesn't kill, since the Mexican masses would certainly have laughed in the I.S.'s face if its lucubrations on the popular front didn't involve very serious questions, where the struggle for the class independence of the Mexican proletariat is at stake, and where it is a matter of life and death for the future of the Mexican revolution and beyond that throughout the Americas.

Thirdly, we can cite a host of examples where our Interna-

tional spoke of popular fronts in semi-colonial countries, where the permanent revolution applied, where there "is no mass workers party," and where the proletariat "has historically remained subordinate to bourgeois nationalism." So where was the mass workers party in El Salvador, the indispensable element for a popular front according to the new version? Or is it the case, according to the I.S., that our tendency hoodwinked not only the Mexican workers for almost a decade but also the Salvadoran workers in the midst of a civil war, by insisting that they must break with the popular front? Going through the pages of *Le Bolchévik* and *WV*, we find that we characterized the FMLN/FDR as a popular front. And when Reagan visited France and met Mitterrand in June 1982, one of the slogans of the LTF was "El Salvador: Break the Popular Front!" (*Le Bolchévik* No. 33, May 1982). This demand was vehemently contested by the Pabloites at the time, when the LCR saw itself as the fourth component of Mitterrand's popular-front majority.

We could cite other examples like Bolivia in 1952 and 1970-71, where our International attacked Lora's POR for its support to the popular front, i.e., its alliance with a supposed anti-imperialist wing of the army and of the Bolivian bourgeoisie. Even in Algeria where there was and is no mass workers party, where the union movement is still under the baton of the nationalists and the military, where the proletariat "has historically remained subordinate to bourgeois nationalism," we said in the January 1992 *Le Bolchévik*, referring to a demonstration called by the FFS [Front of Socialist Forces, a bourgeois party based in the Berber regions], that it was "supported by a broad class-collaborationist coalition, a popular front, the National Committee to Save Algeria, bringing together the UGTA union federation, which has long been and still remains partially controlled by the FLN, the employers associations of the private and public sector, and the Stalinist party (PAGS)." At the same time, we ferociously attacked the (Pabloite) PST when it wanted to put together an FOP (Workers and People's Front), i.e., a class-collaborationist coali-

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1997 May Day march in Mexico City.

Internationalist photo

tion, in other words, *a popular front*.

Thus we have the proof that long-held positions of the ICL are now being systematically revised, and this is accompanied by a revisionism which therefore necessarily affects positions developed by Trotsky. The latter talked about the existence of popular fronts in countries of belated capitalist development, and he was far from renouncing the theory of permanent revolution—quite the opposite. In a discussion of problems of Latin America (4 November 1938), Trotsky characterized in this way Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang [KMT], Lázaro Cárdenas' Party of the Mexican Revolution [PRM], and the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance [APRA]—which are all bourgeois parties: "The Kuomintang in China, the PRM in Mexico, and the APRA in Peru are very similar organizations. It is the People's Front in the form of a party." You can't accuse Trotsky of paying tribute here to the "myth of 'workers and peasants parties'" or "the bloc of four classes" [as the ICL leadership wrote of the IG]. The popular front can be built around certain bourgeois parties in the absence of mass reformist workers parties. Even when he defined the PRM as a "People's Front in the form of a party," Trotsky noted (January 1939) that "At the present time in Mexico there is no workers party, no trade union that is in the process of developing independent class politics and that is able to launch an independent candidate."

Barbara, in her 14 June 1997 report, notes a point from Jim [Robertson] that "class collaboration is as old as the existence of classes themselves, whereas the popular front is but one specific historical expression of class collaboration, in the period between the 1935 Seventh [Comintern] Congress and the Hitler-Stalin pact." The I.S. motion of 28 June 1997 explains that this is "a particular form of class collaboration, in which a bourgeois workers party, linked up to the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie, seeks to head off the threat of

proletarian power." A lot of centrists have used similar arguments. Thus in order to justify its support to the popular front and its vote for Mitterrand, one of the arguments of Pouvoir Ouvrier, was that we were not in the presence of a popular front because this was characteristic of the late 1930s when such coalitions were put in place to head off the development of a revolutionary situation. This kind of argument, which seeks to limit the scope of a concept to the strict limits of its first appearance, was used by the Mandelites who insisted that Pabloism was only capitulation to the Stalinists like Pablo did in the 1950s.

Ever since Cárdenas broke with the PRI and stood for election as president in 1988 with the support of the left, opposition unions and student organizations, etc., the ICL warned the workers, peasants, women and all the oppressed against the new popular front, and called on them to break with it. Thus in July 1988 we wrote in a superhead in *Workers Vanguard* No. 456, "Left Peddles 'Unity' with Cárdenas Popular Front." In the following issue we said in another article: "The Cárdenas popular front seeks to channel the massive discontent into the framework of bourgeois politics. Its aim is to restore credibility for pro-imperialist capitalist rule in Mexico." Similarly, at the time of the 1994 elections in Mexico, *WV* [No. 604] of 5 August 1994 reproduced a supplement to *Espartaco* (back when the GEM put out propaganda against class collaboration) which notably said in big letters, "No to Cárdenas Popular Front! For a Revolutionary Workers Party!"

The role of the popular front headed by the PRD is to erect a dike to contain the popular anger and mobilizations of the working class, as well as poor and landless peasants, women and indigenous Indians. PRD wall slogans in 1994 proclaimed: "Neither marches nor demonstrations, Cuauhtémoc will offer solutions." To accomplish this, the PRD gathered around itself a popular front, receiving the support and subordination of union bureaucrats, reformist and centrist parties, Zapatistas whose bullets were turned into ballots for the PRD, and groups of poor peasants in the countryside. This is what our International denounced for years, but has stopped saying.

In the last elections, some union leaders were also "external candidates" presented by the PRD, i.e., candidates who were not members of the PRD. These candidates came from precisely those unions which had been active in their opposition to the corporatist control of the workers movement by the PRI, and which adhered to the Cárdenas popular front. The



popular front around Cárdenas controls the unions which have broken with the rigidly PRI-controlled corporatist CTM (Mexican Workers Federation). Thus it chains sections of the working class, the peasantry and radicalized youth to a so-called "anti-imperialist," "democratic" and "progressive" wing of the bourgeoisie, in order to better defend capitalism and ensure the interests of the imperialists and their local valets, and to prepare a bloody defeat for the working class and all the oppressed, as was the case in Chile. Today our International no longer warns the Mexican workers of this danger, thanks to the so-called absence of the popular front!

One of the arguments on which we have based ourselves, since 1988, in saying that there is a popular front around Cárdenas is the miserable support that he receives from the whole spectrum of the Mexican "left." This support can be electoral as well as trade-union in nature, or in the form of a pressure bloc: from the Stalinists to the partisans of Ted Grant's Militant group (and including a part of the Pabloists), all of whom liquidated into the PRD, to organizations such as the Morenoite POS-Z, their LTS offshoot (currently linked with Workers Power) and the pro-USec LUS. The latter three groups, while not having voted for the PRD in the last elections, nevertheless have capitulated to the PRD in practice. They did not call on the workers to break with the PRD, nor to vote against it, but called instead to cast a blank ballot in order to avoid appearing as electoral sponsors for Cárdenas, freshly returned from Wall Street. On the other hand, in the "autonomous" unions they don't hesitate to offer themselves up as brokers for the popular front. The PRT, formed by Mexican supporters of the USec, not only supported the PRD but even presented a candidate (who was elected) on the PRD slate, and had election posters supporting Cárdenas which included the symbol of their party and that of the PRD. In the September 1997 issue of *Inprecor*, a PRT resolution stated: "the PRT is thus part of an electoral alliance with the PRD and various social and civic organizations," and that "for the PRT the question is posed of eventual participation in the Cárdenas government."

After all that, those who refuse to see that there is a popular front led by the PRD might as well not have any eyes at all. Because the role of a Trotskyist vanguard worthy of the name is to show to the working class the dangers of the popular front and to fight for the class independence of the proletariat, for it to break with this class-collaborationist alliance, so that it can take the leadership of all the oppressed masses for the conquest of power. Permanent revolution is not a compilation of verbose phrases, but begins with this concrete struggle for the class independence of the proletariat, not only breaking the corporatist stranglehold of the PRI but also breaking with the popular front around Cárdenas.

After having called upon Mexican workers for a decade to break with the popular front led by Cárdenas, and at the precise moment of the victory of the latter in last July's elections in Mexico City, the I.S. stopped putting forward this slogan. Yet it isn't the nature of the PRD that changed, nor the popular-front policy of the entire spectrum of the Mexican "left." What has changed is the policy of the I.S., which now spits on the fights that our international waged in the past. But why does the I.S. insist that there

is not and cannot be a popular front around the PRD? The new line is the pretext for an abstentionist policy. In denying the existence of this popular front, the political struggle to break the proletariat and the oppressed from the Cárdenas popular front is swept under the rug. With this subterfuge, the ICL leadership has proven again that it is not at all interested in the struggle to provide a revolutionary leadership for the working class. It's not surprising that the GEM didn't have a leaflet or any other kind of propaganda at the time of the last elections in Mexico. Either the "battle" against Negrete and Socorro cut them off from the real world and its struggles, to sink into suicidal navel-gazing, or they learned early on the lesson drawn by the I.S. and the LTF leadership in France that "you have to know how to stop a leaflet"!

### VIII) Forward to the Revolutionary Rectification of Our International!

All of the questions dealt with in this document add up to the conclusion that the problem is a situation of generalized crisis in the ICL today. The deep crisis in the LTF has parallels in most of the other sections of the International, and is reflected in the policy carried out by the I.S. in Brazil, its new line on Mexico, and the abandonment of the "Iskra" perspective toward North Africa. In short, it is a mutilation of the Trotskyist program on which the ICL always fought. This drives the party today to withdraw from the convulsions of the class struggle, reducing the idea of the party to something amorphous and sterile. The difference that we have is fundamentally on the question of the party. A party of passive commentators which hides behind "revolutionary" phraseology (which, moreover, is less and less orthodox and less and less faithful to the positions of the ICL) or an active Trotskyist party which seeks to struggle against the treacherous leaderships to wrest the working class and the oppressed from their grip. The object of this battle is the fundamental question of our epoch, that of the revolutionary leadership. The coming International Conference cannot afford to ignore or arrive at an impasse on these questions.

In his letter to Janis of 2 October 1996, Jim Robertson criticized the Founding Declaration of the Internationalist Group for having stated:

"The central thesis of the 1938 Transitional Program of the FI fully retains its validity today: 'The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.... the crisis of the proletarian leadership, having become the crisis in mankind's culture, can be resolved only by the Fourth International!'"

In characterizing this as "insufficient," Robertson writes: "Today, the crisis is not limited to the crisis of revolutionary leadership of the working class. The working classes across the world are qualitatively politically more disoriented and organizationally more dispersed. Today, to put it roughly, we have been forced back before 1914 and without the mixed blessing of an assured, complacent, mass Social Democracy." This is a deeply idealist, and at the same time empiricist vision of history. If Pabloism was Cold War impressionism, this new perspective—which seeks to "junk the old Spartacism," as it

were—is “New World Order” impressionism, which renounces, as the former did as well, the central conclusion of the fundamental program of Trotsky’s Fourth International.

The Internationalist Group criticized the I.S. for its new line, which partakes of the bourgeois/reformist lie of the “death of communism.” This is confirmed, almost word for word, in the letter of comrade Jim Robertson, who accuses the IG of “insensitivity” to a “qualitative change which had occurred and which is part of a larger change which has been trumpeted around by the ruling classes as the ‘death of communism,’ i.e., as the overriding Soviet experience showed, the children of Stalin’s bureaucracy essentially made a mass abdication in favor of capitalism and imperialism.” We won’t go into the fact that this quote admits that the bureaucracy *abdicated* to imperialism and didn’t *lead* the counterrevolution, as the I.S. has vociferously asserted.

When Trotsky declared that the crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership, he did so on the basis of a materialist analysis of the development of capitalism in its period of decay—imperialism. He emphasized that the objective conditions were more than ripe, that they had begun to get rotten, and thus the subjective factor was key. This key thesis has been *confirmed* by the collapse of the Stalinist régimes and the destruction of the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet Union and the deformed workers states of East Europe, which was not the product of a bloody defeat of the working class but of the absence of serious resistance by the latter. In this situation, we insist once again that it is the question of the crisis of leadership which is at the root of this defeat. But according to the new line, it is the working class which has become the problem as well as the leadership. Are we seeing a new variant of the thesis that the proletariat gets the leadership it deserves?

It should be noted that while the Transitional Program begins with the statement that the crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of proletarian leadership, as does the document of the Second International Conference [of the ICL] and the Declaration of Principles of the SL/U.S. (in its point 2), *this reference has simply disappeared in the new declaration of principles* [of the ICL]. It is obvious that for the I.S. it’s not a question of having a new declaration of principles simply to update it and extend it to the international level, but rather in order to truncate its principal element. For our part, we believe that as far as the current period is concerned, we are still living in the era of imperialism, that is the period of wars and revolutions, and the task of the vanguard is fundamentally the same: to forge in the class struggle a revolutionary leadership for the working class and the oppressed. Yes, “the historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership.” This key phrase of the Transitional Program *and* of the Declaration of Principles of the SL is not outdated or diminished today, quite the contrary.

The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union was a historic defeat which has greatly affected the consciousness of the workers, youth and left militants around the world. But this impact has not been uniform, it varies not only from one place to another but also from one class to another. What

collapsed is not the will to struggle of the workers; those who have been deeply demoralized are the whole gamut of Stalinist and pseudo-Trotskyist militants who believe the bourgeoisie’s propaganda that “communism is dead.”

The defeat in the USSR has led many workers to question the viability of a planned economy. But the constant attacks of the bourgeoisie and the manifest decay of capitalist society today lead millions of people to see that capitalism is more and more brutal. Important sectors of the working class and the oppressed in various countries have thrown themselves into arduous class struggles. The turbulence of the objective situation offers an opening for the intervention of the subjective factor: the revolutionary party. It is wrong to characterize the present *contradictory* and *volatile* state of consciousness as a “decisive” regression that will endure. Moreover, it is false to think that prior to the destruction of the USSR the consciousness of the masses was somehow “adequate.” There was one or another form of reformist consciousness, depending on the leadership which dominated the proletariat. Whether then or now, the working class cannot arrive at *revolutionary* consciousness without the successful intervention of the revolutionary vanguard.

It is important to recall that the Transitional Program was written at a time that Victor Serge called “Midnight in the Century.” Hitler’s taking of power represented the greatest defeat that the proletariat had suffered; the Spanish Revolution was stabbed in the back and defeated; in France a major defeat was being prepared; in the Soviet Union, the darkest period of the Stalinist purges was under way; in the United States the overwhelming mass of workers were chained to Roosevelt; in much of the colonial world the consciousness of the proletariat was barely awakening. Trotsky thought that it was very possible that the USSR would be destroyed in the Second World War. It was against the widespread skepticism and despair of left-wing petty bourgeois that Trotsky wrote his two classics, *Stalinism and Bolshevism* and *Their Morals and Ours*.

And in the last chapter of the Transitional Program, Trotsky responds to the “skeptical” pessimists in these terms: “The Fourth International has already arisen out of great events: the greatest defeats of the proletariat in history. The cause for these defeats is to be found in the degeneration and perfidy of the old leadership.” He continues: “The class struggle does not tolerate an interruption.... Long live the Fourth International!”

The Transitional Program *is not based on the existing consciousness* of the workers, but rather on the objective situation. The idea of a system of transitional demands goes back to *before* the October Revolution, particularly to Lenin’s work, “The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It,” which aided in the preparation of the revolution. This conception had been applied by the early Comintern. In a discussion held before the founding of the Fourth International, Trotsky declared:

“We have repeated many times that the scientific character of our activity consists in the fact that we *adapt* our program not to political conjunctures or the thought or mood of the

masses as this mood is today, but we adapt our program to the objective situation...the mentality, the mood is a secondary factor—the prime factor is the objective situation.... This program is a scientific program. It is based on an objective analysis of the objective situation.”

—“Discussions with Trotsky on the Transitional Program” [1938]

It is on this *basis* that Trotsky insisted that the crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership. This fundamental conception is true for the entire *imperialist epoch* of wars and revolutions.

And here is what Cannon said in his speech against Pabloism, “Factional Struggle and Party Leadership” (3 November 1953):

“Leadership is the one unsolved problem of the working class of the entire world. The only barrier between the working class of the world and socialism is the unsolved problem of leadership. That is what is meant by ‘the question of the party.’ That is what the *Transitional Program* means when it states that the crisis of the labor movement is the crisis of leadership.... It is the most important of all questions—the question of the party.

“And if our break with Pabloism—as we see it now clearly—if it boils down to one point and is concentrated in one point, that is it: the question of the party.... The essence of Pabloist revisionism is the overthrow of that part of Trotskyism which is today its most vital part—the conception of the crisis of mankind as the crisis of the leadership of the labor movement summed up in the question of the party.”

The Call for the Third International Conference [of the ICL] notes the wearing out of experienced cadres. Practically all of them honestly admit that they are demoralized. But why? Has the class struggle disappeared, are the workers and oppressed afraid to defend themselves against the attacks of the capitalists and their states? On the contrary, in Italy in 1992 and 1994, in France in 1995, in 1996 and again quite recently, as well as elsewhere we have seen struggles which are without precedent in recent decades. Latin America is boiling, there are repeated revolts in Argentina like the strikes by public sector workers, in Brazil there are important struggles by workers and peasants, and opportunities for recruitment in Mexico directed against the left flank of the popular front. Southeast Asia is no different, there are waves of struggles by the South Korean proletariat, a restive proletariat in China. One could also cite South Africa, etc.

In the face of a situation which is a real field for battle and intervention by Marxists, the I.S. is incapable of giving hope to the members of the International because its line expresses, reflects and feeds this defeatism. In characterizing this period as one of defeats everywhere, it abandons concrete perspectives of intervention for the cadres, who, logically, then become demoralized. The resignations by leading cadres as well as middle-level cadres, the repeated cases of working during a strike, flow from this line of the international leadership. No, what has been spiked following the historic defeat suffered by the proletariat with the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union is not the class struggle but the opportunist left,

both ex-Stalinist and social-democratic, and also the demoralized tendencies claiming to be Trotskyist. And if this umpteenth “crisis of Marxism” has had such an impact on the ICL, it is because it is itself evolving in the direction of centrism and abandoning in practice the Trotskyist program. This is an unfinished process, but a real one.

The Permanent Revolution Faction opposes the abstentionist and ultimately liquidationist course of the I.S., which despite its many phrases about the importance of the party is in fact carrying out a policy of self-destruction and liquidation of the party. What is striking is the contempt of the I.S. for the members of the International, characterizing one section after another as “centrist” when the source of the centrist line is the I.S. itself. This contempt for the ranks of its own organization goes together with the statement that the problem isn’t “limited” to the leaderships which defend capitalism, but extends to the proletariat itself.

In repeatedly refusing to intervene in workers struggles to put forward a revolutionary perspective and demands capable of wresting the ranks from the grip of their present reformist leaders and exposing the centrists, the I.S. liquidates the party as an active factor fighting to win the leadership of the working class and to be recognized as the champion of all oppressed layers. The recent fights in the LTF, placed in the international framework of the bankruptcy of various sections of the ICL, should lead us to undertake a global and deep-going analysis of the work and line being pursued by the international leadership. The fight to bring our program into the working class and to win the proletariat and the oppressed masses to the banner of a reformed Fourth International is as current as ever, and with each day that passes it is posed even more acutely.

This is the objective that the Permanent Revolution Faction has set for its struggle. This will necessarily take place through a battle to rectify the present political line of our International and to renew links with the program which recruited us to the ICL, a Trotskyist program of struggle rather than prostration: a program which was the pride of all ICL members because of our historic combat for the continuity of the Trotskyist program, of the communism of Lenin and Trotsky and the traditions of Cannonism. We call upon our comrades in all sections of the International to study this document, to seek the causes of the present political disorientation of the International, and to join us in waging this fight. And while we do not know at first hand the activity of the Internationalist Group, it appears from what we have read of their publications that they have remained faithful to the authentic program of the ICL and we encourage comrades to read what they say. Their expulsion from our party was in fact a means to get rid of obstacles so that the international leadership could clear the way for a centrist and abstentionist course. Return to the communism of Lenin and Trotsky! For the struggle for the Trotskyist program and the continuity of the struggles and traditions of the ICL! Two, three, many October Revolutions! Communist greetings,  
Djura and Zakaria

# Once Again on the Permanent Revolution

by the Permanent Revolution Faction

[translation]

Paris

29 December 1997

The following points were prepared for the class on the permanent revolution which was scheduled for the plenary meeting of Saturday, 12 December 1997. In fighting for the authentic perspective of Trotsky, we are also defending the fundamental political heritage of the Spartacist tendency. In order to do this successfully, we must oppose the great confusion and disorientation which the I.S. is sowing today.

There is much to be said on the question of the permanent revolution, over and above the points we have raised on the "Iskra" perspective, Brazil and Mexico, but for the moment we want to emphasize the following points:

1) The program of permanent revolution is applicable to a whole series of countries: from pre-revolutionary Russia and China to India, Turkey, Iran and the Maghreb; from South Africa to Mexico, Brazil and the other countries of Latin America.

What do these countries have in common? "Feudal peonage" or "semi-feudal" economic and political conditions? No. In reality, the particular histories of these countries vary enormously. For example, *Russia*, where Trotsky first formulated the theory of the permanent revolution, had a feudal past, as is the case with some other countries as well. But in *China*, where he extended the theory of permanent revolution to the international plane, Trotsky ridiculed the references by Bukharin and Stalin to "Chinese feudalism," characterizing them as an attempt to "justify collaboration with the bourgeoisie in the revolution (i.e., the Menshevik policy)" ("New Opportunities for the Chinese Revolution, New Tasks and New Mistakes," September 1927). This class collaboration was called the anti-imperialist united front, or the "bloc of four classes."

But despite this profound difference between Russia and China, the permanent revolution applied to both countries—and it also applies to Latin America or India, which have very different histories.

The characteristic which all these countries have in common is that they are all *countries of belated capitalist development*, characterized by uneven and combined development; they combine, often at the same time, the most backward social conditions with the most modern industry; and *they have never had a victorious bourgeois-democratic revolution*. The national oppression of Mexico or Algeria is not the product of vestiges of the Middle Ages, but an integral part of the modern epoch of imperialism. The agrarian question in Mexico or Bra-

zil is not one of "feudal peonage," an expression which in itself is a contradiction. The main obstacle to integral economic development in the semi-colonial countries is not "feudalism" but the highest stage of capitalism, imperialism, which is the epoch of capitalist decay.

The real struggle to resolve the unresolved bourgeois-democratic tasks in the semi-colonial countries is not, as the International Secretariat insists today, always a struggle against "feudal remnants." It is above all a struggle against the 20th-century bourgeoisie and its modern institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; it is a struggle against the imperialist bourgeoisie and its servants, the bourgeoisies of the semi-colonial countries.

2) Did Trotsky say that the permanent revolution depends on the existence of feudal remnants? No, he did not. In the theses that he wrote to sum up the content of his book *The Permanent Revolution* (1930), he stated:

"With regard to the countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving democracy and national emancipation is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses."

This all depends on the leadership of a revolutionary vanguard party which fights to extend this revolution to the advanced capitalist countries.

One notes that in his theses, "What Is the Permanent Revolution?", Trotsky makes no reference to "feudalism," "semi-feudalism" or "remnants" of feudalism. Was it that he "forgot" to mention this in his "basic postulates"? No, this absence is explained by the fact that the permanent revolution does not depend on the existence of feudal or semi-feudal conditions, remnants or structures of this kind in a given country.

3) As an example illustrating the programmatic dangers of the position put forward by the I.S., let us take the case of South Africa.

The permanent revolution is decisive for the proletarian struggle in that country, as indicated by the title of an important issue of the *Black History and the Class Struggle* series: "South Africa and Permanent Revolution." But it should be clear that in South Africa, the revolution will not be directed against feudal or semi-feudal vestiges. A brief look at its history and social structure shows this. The Dutch East Indies Company, a symbol of mercantile capitalism, founded a colony at the Cape in the 17th century. The British later conquered the country, not to impose "feudal remnants" but to establish



diamond and gold mines and extend their colonial empire in Africa from the Cape to Cairo. (Recall that Holland and Britain were the first countries to undergo bourgeois revolutions, well before the colonization of South Africa.)

The apartheid system was built on this basis, because of the capitalists' need for a cheap labor force, with no rights or means of defending itself, in the gold and diamond mines. As for the land question in South Africa, it will be resolved not through a struggle against feudal remnants but through a struggle against capitalist farmers, above all against the capitalist system as a whole. Trotskyists in South Africa must mercilessly fight anyone who says the permanent revolution would be directed against "feudal peonage" or feudal remnants, because such a position would not only cause political confusion but lead to the worst defeats. This is the logical extension of the "theory" of the I.S., which pretends that the permanent revolution is dependent on the existence of elements inherited from feudalism.

4) The *agrarian revolution* is a central part of the permanent revolution. But what does this really mean? In his letter to Preobrazhensky on China [March-April 1928], Trotsky emphasized: "The agrarian revolution in China is aimed *against the urban and rural bourgeoisie*." The emphasis is Trotsky's. In the discussion on "Latin American Problems" (1938), where he talked about popular fronts in Latin America, he said: "we especially oppose the proletariat to the bourgeoisie in the agrarian question." In his September 1927 article on China, he repeated in a more detailed way:

"But as it turned out, the bourgeoisie did not put forward a single political group that would agree to participate in revolutionary struggle against Bukharin's feudalism. And it is not accidental. In China there are no noble lords standing in opposition to the bourgeoisie. The landholder as a general rule is the urban bourgeois. The small landholder—the kulak, the gentry—is closely linked with the usurer and the urban bourgeois. "Unless one is playing with words, there is no feudalism in

China. In the Chinese village there are serf-owner relations which are crowned, however, not by feudal, but by bourgeois property forms and a bourgeois sociopolitical order. This type of serf-owner relationship, which is a result of agrarian overpopulation, given the overall lag in capitalist development, can be found—of course in much more 'mild' forms—in several Balkan countries, which have known neither feudalism nor the noble estate since their emancipation from the Turkish yoke. Of course, in China poverty and bondage take inhumane forms such as were hardly to be encountered even in the age of feudalism. Nonetheless, the attempt to create feudalism in China, still more its prevalence, relies not on facts, but on the naked desire to justify collaboration with the bourgeoisie."

As in the case of the Mexican popular front, while the reformists want to insist on the existence of feudalism or feudal remnants, where they do not exist, in order to justify their class collaboration with a so-called "progressive" and "anti-imperialist" wing of the bourgeoisie, the I.S. insists on this myth in order to justify its abstentionist policy—as if these countries were so backward that it is not possible to have a popular front, and proletarian revolution were a very remote perspective because of the supposed predominance of elements inherited from feudalism.

The I.S. is also burying the program of permanent revolution insofar as it is abandoning, in deeds, the struggle to forge Bolshevik parties in various semi-colonial countries and among those who form a "human bridge" with the metropolis (immigrants and exiles). This policy also makes impossible the construction of authentic Trotskyist parties in the imperialist countries, resulting at best in the construction of centrist parties. If we do not find the means to reach these strategic layers, then as Trotsky said about the black question in the United States, "the permanent revolution and all the rest would be only a lie."

—Permanent Revolution Faction

## Letter to the Comrades of the International by the Permanent Revolution Faction

[translation]

Paris

11 January 1998

With the latest about-face on the question of "remnants of feudalism" and permanent revolution, notably over Mexico, we have once again experienced the abrupt twists and turns of the winding and tortuous centrist road on which the international leadership has placed the entire party today. In the latest I.S. mailing, you could read a transcription of the intervention by comrade Jim Robertson during a pre-conference discussion in San Francisco on 20 December 1997; the transcription was received at the beginning of this year. Here is what the comrade said on this question:

"I believe that it is a mistake, and a mistake that is easy to make, to say, when we are talking of Mexico, that there are

pre-capitalist survivals. The only pre-capitalist survivals that there could be there would be if there were still human sacrifices. Because the arriving Spaniards, even if their heads were full of feudal ideas, practiced mercantile capitalism, whether they wanted to or not. The system of haciendas, which as far as I know no longer exists almost everywhere in Latin America, produced for the world market. They corresponded to the slave plantations in the U.S. South, for example. These are not pre-capitalist survivals but the product of a division of the world...."

The point would be harmless if it was a simple rectification of an unfortunate formulation which accidentally appeared in our press. But that's not what we're dealing with here. Moreover, it is not even mentioned that these points were raised as the main lines of critiques and attacks against the IG, in order

to impute to it a supposed denial of permanent revolution. The point would even have escaped notice if we hadn't put the question to the leaders of the majority in Paris to demand some explanations, especially since a class had been scheduled for January 4 precisely on the question of permanent revolution, just before the text of Jim's remarks arrived. During the class, the majority reporter himself sought to avoid speaking about it. These comrades opposed our document of 28 December 1997 "Once Again on Permanent Revolution," but as could have been expected, without any reflection on their part, they were instantly converted. This time the leaders learned to zag when they were supposed to (although about ten days late).

As we have emphasized, we reject the false position put forward in the public press of the party and repeatedly defended that "feudal peonage in the countryside" continues to subsist in Latin America in general and Mexico in particular. We point out that this statement was accompanied by an incorrect definition of the nature of Spanish colonialism, characterizing it as "feudal." It is fundamental to reject the position that claims permanent revolution depends on the so-called existence of feudal, semi-feudal or pre-capitalist remnants.

On several occasions, whether in *Spartacist*, *Workers Vanguard* or *Le Bolchévique*, the main argument raised to "prove" that the IG "rejected" permanent revolution was based on an insistence on pretending that in the backward capitalist countries of Latin America (notably in the case of Mexico) vestiges of feudalism subsisted, that Spanish colonialism in the Americas was fundamentally feudal and going so far as to claim that the economy of the U.S. South before the Civil War was pre-capitalist. Now it is said that all this was a mistake. All right. Where are the explanations?

Yet in the article on Mexico in *Workers Vanguard* [No. 672] of 8 August 1997, we read: "In Mexico, elements of the Spanish colonial feudal heritage survive in the countryside—the *hacienda* (landed estates), peonage and the *tienda de raya* (stores that take scrip instead of money, to which many peasants are indebted for generations).... In an earlier polemic, the IG took exception to our having pointed to the heritage of feudal peonage in the Mexican countryside. In our response, in 'Potemkin Village Idiocy,' we pointed out that the only reason for the IG to bridle at this elementary Marxist observation is to shed the theory of permanent revolution."

In the introduction to No. 30 of the French edition of *Spartacist*, we also read: "The latter [the Reformation] lent its character to the British mercantile colonial empire, as opposed to the more feudal and priest-ridden Spanish and Portuguese empires which colonized Latin America.... [The] questions of national liberation, or the emancipation of civil society with regard to the church and the destruction of the feudal system of peonage in the countryside, [are] questions which continue to beset the countries of Latin America. The resolution of these questions will be through the application of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.... In Latin America, the heritage of Spanish feudal colonialism is overlaid with a century of North American domination."

Prior to that, in Spring 1997, the article "Potemkin Vil-

lage Idiocy" in *Le Bolchévique*, translated from *WV* [No. 663, 7 March 1997], published well before the revision of our line on the popular front in Mexico, said this against the IG: "Citing our call for 'the destruction of feudal peonage in the countryside' and our reference to 'the inheritance of Spanish feudal colonialism' in Latin America, the *Internationalist* goes on to declaim: 'The myth of Latin American "feudalism," now repeated by the Spartacist League, was invented by the Stalinized Communist parties to justify their stagist politics.' Is the IG arguing that there are no remnants of pre-industrial society in Mexico and other Latin American countries?... If the IG denies that Latin America remains saddled with an inheritance of Spanish feudal colonialism, then it is theoretically dismissing the program of permanent revolution for that region outright.... In practice, this can only mean that the revolutionary proletariat and its vanguard party cede leadership of the struggle around this and issues such as debt peonage and racism against the Indian peasant population to peasant-guerrilla populists like the Zapatistas."

Thus, for a year the I.S. insisted that one had to recognize the existence of feudalism or at least remnants of feudalism in order for permanent revolution to apply, something that Trotsky never said. In our document of 28 December 1997, we took apart this kind of argument, and we have demonstrated the idiocy of this feudal village which only existed (or still exists?) in the heads of some people. We have stressed that the agrarian revolution, as well as the other democratic tasks, cannot be realized other than by the taking of power by the proletariat, drawing behind it the peasant masses, not in a confrontation with imaginary feudalists but against the power of the capitalist class of the bourgeoisie.

During the plenary meeting of the LTF on 4 January 1998, comrades of the majority justified (they didn't explain) this change of tack by saying that it was "just an error of analysis, which doesn't have any programmatic or practical implication." Yet what is now called an "error of analysis" was certainly used as a sledge-hammer argument to prove not only that the IG "is theoretically dismissing the program of permanent revolution" outright, but also that "In practice, this can only mean that the revolutionary proletariat and its vanguard party cede leadership of the struggle" over the agrarian question to "peasant-guerrilla populists" (our emphasis). One can very well see that it was said that this position certainly had practical political consequences, but now these comrades seek to remove this with a cheap sleight-of-hand.

The point is that this is not a secondary or academic question. Permanent revolution is a central question of Trotskyism. A false conception on permanent revolution can only lead to political disorientation and ultimately to capitulation before non-proletarian class forces, in Mexico and internationally. In his preface to his book *The Permanent Revolution*, Trotsky said of the practical extent and the political consequences of theoretical points: "this proves to us once again, and to a very high degree, that everything in the theoretical part of Marxism plays an important role for practical activity. If one takes theoretical disagreements which at first glance seemed abstract through to the end, one always comes to their practical mani-

festations: reality does not pardon a single theoretical error.”

What the comrades of the majority present as being an “error of analysis” has weighty consequences in the part of the world this “theory” was intended for. What this is about is defining what enemy to fight, against “feudalism” (as the Stalinists repeated *ad nauseam* for decades) or against capitalism. And in Mexico that is what this is all about, it’s what the comrades were directed toward, i.e., a bad line. Perhaps for some of the majority here in Paris, paper can take anything that is written on it, and thus this can change according to the prevailing winds, but in Mexico, taking one line or another has consequences. It is the Mexican comrades who have responded vehemently, defending the line of the so-called remains of feudalism which are supposed to exist in Mexico, beginning with the document by Sacramento, “Clueless” (21 October 1997).

The comrades should cast a glance at the responses to our declaration of a faction by comrades O. and Ma. in Mexico. One of the points they base themselves on to attempt to counter our argumentation was their defense of the position of the I.S., for whom not recognizing the predominance of remnants of vestiges of feudalism would be to deny permanent revolution. In his letter of 23 December 1997, O. writes: “The enormous distance which separates them [the Permanent Revolution Faction] from reality becomes even clearer with their denial of any feudal remains in the capitalist countries of belated development. Not to recognize these remains implies recognizing a final or completely triumphant character to the bourgeois-democratic revolution, in striking contradiction with all the foundations of the theory of permanent revolution, whose name the comrades D. and Z. steal in such a cynical and vile manner.” Thus Ma. writes in her letter of 20 December 1997, “the slogan of the Magonistas-Zapatistas, ‘land and liberty,’ is a manifestation of pre-capitalist conditions in which the largest part of the people of Mexico and Latin America live.”

For the comrades of the GEM [Grupo Espartaquista de México, section of the ICL] who defended this position tooth and nail—which is quite respectable, since they thought they were defending a fundamental position of the party, before they found out that it had been changed (and perhaps they still hold this)—it is clear that this is not just a question of analysis, for them it has a precise implication and meaning for their daily political work. Since they are now told that what they were fighting for was a simple error, they should be given, and we all should be given, convincing explanations. Because we believe that normally an international leadership encourages critical thought by its members, and doesn’t limit itself to serving up ready-made thoughts.

Now on the question of “Spanish feudal colonialism” of which “Latin America still carries around a legacy” according to *WV* and *Spartacist*. The colonization of the Americas, with the genocide and pillaging that accompanied it, far from leading to the installation of duchies in America, instead gave rise, as Marx described it, to the primitive accumulation of capital which served as the basis for the later development of capitalism. The same with the character of the slave plantations of the American South. It was claimed that the economy of the slave South was not capitalist. Marx asserted absolutely the opposite. Slavery in the Southern states, he said, was integrated

in the capitalist mode of production, it was not only part of the world market but was created by it. He pointed out that the slave trade was conducted by capitalists, and that in this case the same person was a capitalist and a landowner.

In the document “Once Again on Permanent Revolution” of 28 December, we quoted statements by Trotsky against those who insisted on the existence of feudalism in China, a country which at the time showed even more signs of backwardness than the countries of Latin America today. Following the teachings of Marx and Trotsky, we wrote against the line of the I.S. concerning pre-capitalist remnants in the backward countries: “The characteristic which all these countries have in common is that they are all *countries of belated capitalist development*, characterized by uneven and combined development; they combine, often at the same time, the most backward social conditions with the most modern industry; and *they have never had a victorious bourgeois-democratic revolution*. The national oppression of Mexico or Algeria is not the product of vestiges of the Middle Ages, but an integral part of the modern epoch of imperialism. The agrarian question in Mexico or Brazil is not one of ‘feudal peonage,’ an expression which in itself is a contradiction. The main obstacle to integral economic development in the semi-colonial countries is not “feudalism” but the highest stage of capitalism, imperialism, which is the epoch of capitalist decay.”

Why did the majority have this wrong line which contradicted Marx on the primitive accumulation of capital and the nature of slavery in the United States, Lenin on imperialism and the position of Trotsky on China and the summary which he provided of permanent revolution in his book of the same name? As A. suggested, this was motivated by factional reasons against the IG. If the IG said one thing, it was necessary to say the opposite in order to differentiate oneself. The implications of this line point in the direction of supporting the idea that in the countries of belated capitalist development it is impossible to fight today for socialist revolution in view of the weight of nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism, etc. This was the same anti-Marxist idea put forward by Brunoy (member of the majority) last October when he said: “what is an Algerian worker going to understand of the October Revolution?” He admits today that this was wrong, but what induced him to say such a thing? Perhaps he saw too clearly the implicit logic of the arguments which he had read coming from the I.S.

We want to place this discussion in the context of the debate, such as it presently exists, between the majority and the Permanent Revolution Faction. In recent days, a whole series of lies and insinuations have been circulated by the majority. When they have been presented in a meeting, for example in an object motion in the plenary meeting of the LTF on 4 January 1998, we have responded to them and introduced a counter-motion to reject these absolutely false and highly irresponsible allegations. We suppose that the comrades in the other sections of the international are or will be informed of our motions, including those of the meeting of 7 January 1998.

We have to register as well the lack of seriousness on the part of the majority, i.e., the leadership, which is reflected in the way the discussion has developed. In the absence of a written response by the majority, what we have instead is a bizarre dis-

play of photos of Stalin, Castro, Norden and Negrete. Lately this display has multiplied, spreading from one room to the next. Is the majority itself aware of how this little spectacle demeans it in the eyes of any serious Marxist? It is in the process of humiliating itself, and its demoralization will come in the course of time. Because being a Trotskyist means not fooling around with serious questions and then changing the line from one day to the next, but thinking and then fighting for a coherent Marxist policy. And the majority today is far from being guided by a coherent line.

We want to say frankly to the comrades that what's at stake in this fight is not invented stories but the basic political orientation. One must think about the implications of the new lines that have appeared in the ICL in the last two years. Consider the comrades in Mexico. We suppose that they were convinced by the line that to deny that one is fighting against the "feudal heritage" of Spanish colonialism, etc., would be to deny the permanent revolution. Certain of these comrades fulminated against us on this theme. The others must have been in agreement. Why? Because this is a central question in Mexico. And now? What are they going to do now that they are told today the opposite of what they were told yesterday? Say they agree and be silent? That is not how one educates cadres capable of thinking for themselves and capable of being revolutionary leaders.

The least that one can say is that the light-mindedness which the I.S. has shown in discarding the old line on supposed feudal survivals and replacing it with a new line like one changes a suit of clothes will seriously damage our Mexican comrades, who must have serious difficulties in orienting themselves now. But we must pose the question to all the comrades of how they could have changed their views so swiftly without discussion and without having a fight about it? The explanation given is that it isn't a really important issue with programmatic implications; that it is ultimately just a trifle, and if they made an error, it was corrected. But we are speaking here of a fundamental error on what was presented yesterday as *the* criterion for permanent revolution.

And those who defended the old line as furiously as they will defend the new one should nevertheless think about their political future in following the present leadership, which is pursuing a profoundly self-destructive course for the ICL. If this happened with one of the main lines of the struggle against the IG, what will happen tomorrow with the others? Today you insist that there is no Cárdenas popular front in Mexico, even though many of the comrades for nine years defended the opposite position of fighting against this popular front. But tomorrow will you have to reorient yourselves on this question as well, because there certainly is a popular front in Mexico today, and the consequences of its existence could be dramatic. Or take a third issue, that the Stalinist bureaucracy is supposed to have "led" the counterrevolution in the DDR and elsewhere in the Soviet bloc. Many comrades seem uneasy about defending this anti-Trotskyist thesis. But think about it, will this new line be maintained even though it was never raised either before, during or even after the destruction of the degenerated and deformed workers states until last year? Will there be a reorientation on this as well?

Or maybe the new line won't be changed, "clarified" or

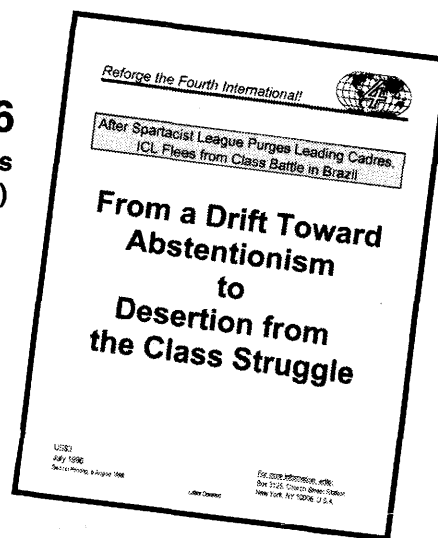
"modified." In that case, one had better reflect on where this line is leading the ICL. We have already said it: this leads toward a coming together with the anti-Soviet anti-Spartacists who held precisely that the bureaucracy was the leader of the counterrevolution. That was the justification of the Pabloites and quite a few others for making a bloc with Walesa, Yeltsin, etc. It is on these questions of fundamental political orientation that the discussion must focus, and this is what the majority wants to avoid with its ridiculous games. We say outright that the orientation of the present leadership of our international is leading to a disaster. It already did so in Brazil, it fundamentally disoriented the Mexican section, and it is in the process of turning cadres into cynics.

In any case, the latest turn by the I.S. surely presages even more abrupt ones, the zigzags will continue, the members would do well to buckle their seat belts if they don't intend to fight against it. Our struggle is intended to undo this line, and that is why we appeal to the comrades to join us in this fight, otherwise the centrist tendency which today prevails in the international will continue its course irremediably.

Communist greetings,  
Permanent Revolution Faction

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## Internationalist Group Statement

30 January 1998

After Courts Order "Search and Seizure" of Militants' Leaflets

# ICL Seeks to Sabotage Defense of Brazilian Trotskyist Workers

3- De se manter, outrossim, na solidariedade passiva, o outro não, aprioristicamente indicado, "COMITÊ DE LUTA CLASSISTA", como se auto denomina, em que pese se deduzir tratar-se daquelas facções clandestinas que, acobertadas sob o manto do anonimato, buscam fugir ao enfrentamento da lei por consequência de seus atos, como no presente caso concreto;

Suit refiled last November ominously slanders CLC as "one of those clandestine factions which hiding under the cover of anonymity seek to flee from confronting the law for the consequences of their acts."

Last September a court in Volta Redonda, Brazil ordered the seizure of a bulletin produced by the Comitê de Luta Classista (CLC—Class Struggle Caucus, initiated by our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil). The CLC leaflet exposed the role of the pro-police group of Artur Fernandes in attempting to loot workers' pension funds, an explosive issue locally and nationally in Brazil. Fernandes was the instrument of a judicial coup in 1996 against the elected president of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SFPMVR), Geraldo Ribeiro, aimed at stopping the campaign to oust municipal *guardas* (cops) from the union. The latest court order against the CLC (case no. 183/97 in the fifth civil division)—the eighth legal action against LQB supporters in the last two years—was issued at the request of the lawyer of Fernandes' clique, Vanise Alves de Carvalho. The demand for an injunction was originally filed on Alves de Carvalho's behalf by a high official of the city's Popular Front government (see "New Repression Against Brazilian Trotskyists" and "International Outcry Against Brazil Witchhunt," *The Internationalist* No. 4, January-February 1998).

The CLC issued an "Alert!" warning that "The Bourgeois Courts of Volta Redonda Attack the Workers' Democratic Rights" (CLC Bulletin No. 3, September 1997). It noted that the draconian censorship law dated from the "New State" dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas, a law that was heavily used under the 21-year military dictatorship (1964-85) to silence leftist and labor militants; that the court ordered the seizure of all copies of the previous CLC bulletin, as well as threatening to seize the belongings of the CLC and Geraldo Ribeiro; and that the request for the injunction demanded a list of members of the CLC. The alert concluded: "this attack is directed against *all* those who fight to defend the workers' interests.... Remember: an attack against one is an attack against all." Understanding this clear and elementary fact, labor organizations from around the world—from Brazil, El Salvador and the U.S. to South Africa and the Philippines—sent protest statements in solidarity with the victims of this latest repression.

But the leadership of the International Communist League (ICL) had a very different response.

For three months the ICL showed absolutely *no interest* in this case. No statement, no inquiries, dead silence. Then, on December 20, *Workers Vanguard* (newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.) made simultaneous phone calls, evidently synchronized to the minute, to Internationalist Group members Jan Norden and Abram Negrete. The *WV* "reporters" had a list of increasingly sinister insinuations about the CLC defense case, peppered with speculation about plans for fusion of the IG and LQB, and ending up with *WV*'s litany of lies against the Brazilian comrades. A few days later *WV* No. 681 (2 January 1998) printed a new smear job against the IG/LQB, rehashing its rantings and complaining of "The Silence of the IGs." Since we had circulated an international solidarity appeal (receiving considerable support), this was a rather bizarre charge. Many *WV* readers wondered what it was all about.

What was going on here was a blatant attempt to denigrate the defense of proletarian fighters under attack by the bourgeois state, for the most cynical factional reasons. It was certainly no accident that the strange calls from *WV* came exactly *one day* after the Permanent Revolution Faction of the ICL handed in a document in Paris announcing its political solidarity with the IG and its defense of the LQB against the vicious vendetta by the ICL leadership. Clearly, a main purpose of the new attack was internally directed—to harden up any wavering members by dumping a bucket of mud on those who dared to expose the leadership's lies. The *WV* 681 article marks a new low in the ICL leaders' obsessive frenzy against the IG/LQB and the PRF. Going beyond character assassination, the ICL has undertaken a sinister campaign to *undermine international solidarity* with the class-struggle Brazilian militants.

*WV* recycles the lies—which we have already proven to be false—that come from the same pro-police elements and Popular Front city government of Volta Redonda that launched the repression. Meanwhile, the *WV* article says *not one word in defense of the victims*. It shows not the slightest indignation or concern over the blatant use of capitalist state repression to *ban leaflets* put out by leftist trade unionists in Brazil. Instead, sneering about our "'urgent' call" for defense against the re-

pression, and that the IG has "appealed for 'international solidarity' on the basis that their Brazilian allies are 'class war' heroes," *WV* dismisses the victims as a "phony" union formation, implies that the repression is only "according to the IG," and *denounces* our defense campaign as a "cynical sham."

What *WV* quite deliberately chose *not* to report, from their "interview" with comrade Norden, is that he informed them that the repression is continuing, that on November 14, the court suit against the CLC was re-registered and the individual specifically targeted is now Jorge de Oliveira, a retired black steel worker. Moreover, the suit's authors are now threatening a criminal prosecution. But this is of no concern to the editors of *WV*.

Indeed, the *WV* article *vilely attacks the targets of this repression as "dangerous hustlers."* This filth is hurled at a largely black group of working-class militants with decades of struggle, many of whom were fired and blacklisted and who have been hit by endless state repression for fighting against class collaboration and racist oppression.

*WV's* vituperation is intended to cover up the fact that the ICL leadership *deserted* from the struggle to remove the cops from the SFPMMVR at the moment of greatest danger. Alleging "unacceptable risks to the vanguard," ICL representatives called on the LQB to help "pull our hands out of the boiling water." When the Brazilian comrades refused this ignominious ultimatum, the ICL broke relations with them on 18 June 1996, the day before cops and courts shut down a union meeting called to oust the police. At first pretending to defend Ribeiro against the court suits aimed at removing him as president of the union, while simultaneously denouncing the LQB as "trade-union opportunists," ICL leaders are now broadcasting loud and clear that they are in fact *on the other side* of the continuing class battle in Volta Redonda.

Fleeing from the vanguard to the rearguard, refusing to defend from state repression the class-struggle militants who continued the fight for cops out of the unions, repeating the lies spewed out by the popular-front government and pro-police elements who launched the repression, and now denouncing the international solidarity campaign with the Brazilian comrades under fire from the state as a "sham," the ICL leadership is acting as an external adjunct of the popular front.

### ICL's Factional Frenzy Out of Control

*Workers Vanguard* continues to put an equal sign between the pro-police provocateurs installed by a judicial coup against the union ranks, and the militants victimized by state repression for their fight to throw cops out of the labor movement. Previous *WV* articles said the two sides are "equally sordid." Now *WV* 681 calls them "equally unprincipled" while dismissing as a "sordid squabble" the struggle between the anti-racist unionists and the self-proclaimed defender of the *guardas*, Artur Fernandes, whom *WV* itself correctly characterizes as a "pro-cop thug." Where in a series of publications the ICL previously found itself obliged to recognize that the LQB's fight to expel cops from the union was a "principled" and difficult struggle, *WV* now rants that the Brazilian comrades tried to use the campaign to expel cops from the union as "a factional club against their rivals for union leadership." As we have pre-



Vanguarda Operária

**Geraldo Ribeiro with Regina Célia, woman worker fired by Popular Front. City government sued Ribeiro, threatening four years imprisonment, for leading campaign against this racist firing.**

viously noted, when *WV* says both sides in this struggle are the same, *this is a betrayal and a cover-up for the class enemy.* And the posture of neutrality is fake: the ICL leaders have retailed one smear after another against the LQB from the mouth of Artur Fernandes and the bourgeois press.

Once again *WV* covers for Fernandes with the lie that it was the LQB which has been "dragging the SFPMMVR union through the bosses' courts"! In fact, it is *Fernandes* who, in tandem with the Popular Front government and the courts that imposed this stooge against the expressed will of the union ranks, has launched one court action after another against Ribeiro and other comrades of the LQB/CLC. *WV* 681 again rehashes Fernandes' smear that comrade Geraldo Ribeiro is supposed to have sued the very union of which he is the elected president. Yet the *WV* article studiously avoids the documented proof we presented in our replies refuting this and their previous round of frenzied lies and distortions (see *The Internationalist*, Nos. 3 and 4, as well as the earlier IG dossier on *Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil: Cops, Courts Out of the Unions*).

Nowhere does *WV* even mention the letter from Geraldo Ribeiro's ex-lawyer stating that Ribeiro refused the court's offer to rule in his favor in December 1996, that Ribeiro insisted



“that he was against any intervention by the justice system to resolve differences among workers,” and that because of this principled opposition to court intervention, the lawyer resigned as his representative. *WV* seeks to suppress this because it is a devastating refutation of its slanders.

Meanwhile, in yet another back-handed alibi for Artur Fernandes & Co., *WV* claims the pro-cop clique has taken “a page from the LQB’s book” and “repudiated their own lawyer’s action.” What are the facts? Geraldo Ribeiro’s former lawyers—provided by a local civil rights group to defend him against the court and cop onslaught—erroneously filed legal papers which, while seeking to block summary court action in the barrage of cases against him, listed the union as defendant, something which Ribeiro; as elected SFPMMR president, never would have allowed. Contrary to *WV* 681, Ribeiro did not passively “only let them ‘expire’”—he insisted these actions be *withdrawn*. Moreover, this was at a time when the pro-cop clique had launched yet another suit against Ribeiro after assaulting him at the union hall in January 1997—another fact that *WV* seeks to obscure. In a statement to the court Ribeiro explained his categorical opposition to court intervention. In fact, a previous *WV* article (No. 671, 11 July 1997) admitted “the court records show that Ribeiro did indeed file a withdrawal of all three” requests for injunctions his lawyers had submitted. But *WV* appears unconcerned about its inability to keep its own story straight. The ICL leaders’ *modus operandi* is to just keep slinging more mud, hoping some will stick.

Throughout, Ribeiro has stressed his opposition to intervention in the workers movement by the capitalist courts and cops, and has acted consistently. Insisting on this fundamental class principle, Ribeiro ordered the withdrawal of the court actions, producing a split with the lawyers who filed them. What of Fernandes? *WV* 681 refers to a “note of clarification” by the pro-police stooge on the latest suit against the Brazilian comrades. This statement was in response to the considerable outcry against this suit in the labor movement, in Brazil and internationally, as a result of the defense campaign that the ICL calls a “sham.” Yet far from rejecting appeals to the bourgeois courts on principle or breaking from their lawyer, Fernandes & Co. declare “we recognize the professional value” of the lawyer, Vanise Alves de Carvalho, only seeking a bit of distance from what they call her “unfortunate technical conduct.” Meanwhile, it smears the CLC as dangerous gangsters, seeking to provoke more cop repression against them. And a couple of weeks later, the lawyer, who continues to be employed by Fernandes, *refiled* the suit and threatened to escalate it into a criminal prosecution!



Vanguarda Operária

**Bosses’ courts of Brazil’s “Steel City” are now targeting LQB and Class Struggle Caucus militant Jorge de Oliveira, retired after 25 years working at Latin America’s largest steel plant (in background).**

The rampant dishonesty of the new *WV* is stunning. It histrionically presents the pseudo-revelation that comrade Norden said we “found out about” the court actions filed by Geraldo’s lawyers long before the ICL’s phony exposés; it doesn’t report that Norden told the *WV* “reporters” that as soon as Geraldo found out about the requests for injunctions in January 1997 (not July 1996, as *WV* dishonestly pretends), he immediately ordered their withdrawal, *months* before *WV* published its first article on this question in May 1997. Similarly dishonest is *WV*’s attempt to pretend that the LQB failed to publicize Ribeiro’s July 1996 letter to the local *Diário do Vale* newspaper stating his principled opposition to court intervention, or is somehow hiding this letter. Not only did the other local paper publish an interview with Ribeiro shortly thereafter, in which he denounced the bourgeois court system, his July 1996 letter was extensively quoted in his January 1997 leaflet, several thousand copies of which were distributed to Volta Redonda workers.

A key part of their new smear job consists of insinuations about the CLC bulletin that Volta Redonda courts ordered seized. After mockingly citing the Brazilian comrades’ appeal that “proclaimed: ‘The bosses’ courts want to silence the voice that tells the truth,’” *WV* 681 states:

“What gives? In a telephone interview with IG *supremo* Jan Norden on December 20, a *Workers Vanguard* reporter asked why, ‘if the point was to silence the voice that tells the truth,’ the IG hadn’t circulated the issue of the CLC newsletter suppressed by the courts. Replied Norden, ‘We’re not basically pushing for that.’ Norden and his IG certainly haven’t pushed for the truth.”

What comrade Norden told them was that we were waging a *defense campaign* against state repression. Recall that the courts in Volta Redonda ordered the *search and seizure* of every copy of this newsletter. A court officer was dispatched to the LQB’s office, where he was advised that no copies of the leaflet were left, nor did he find any. This left the court in a quandary because

they couldn't produce the *corpus delicti* (the body of evidence of a crime). Now *WV* demands that we should have circulated the evidence that the state couldn't come up with!

While the ICL pretends that this is all just a "sham," let us remind readers that the Brazilian comrades are facing serious repression. The suit against them threatened to seize their belongings and to hit them with thousands of dollars in fines, as well as demanding a list of the members of the CLC. In fact, the copy of the leaflet submitted to the court included a number of names of putative CLCers scrawled on it by the authors of the suit. Ominously describing the CLC as "one of those clandestine factions which hiding under the cover of anonymity seek to flee from confronting the law for the consequences of their acts," the suit that was resubmitted in mid-November threatens criminal prosecution of the class-struggle unionists. Any serious militant can understand why responsible defenders of labor and the left were not pushing to circulate the CLC's bulletin at that time. But blinded by factional fury, *WV* doesn't see or care about this.

Instead, they hurl vile insinuations aimed at damaging solidarity efforts. To counter this unprincipled attack on the defense campaign, and as the case is still continuing more than four months later, we have decided to print here a translation of CLC bulletin No. 2. We also append a translation of the CLC's most recent bulletin (No. 4), on the defense campaign.

### The Guilty Silence of the ICL

In what has now become its standard operating procedure, *WV* quietly abandons other accusations that it once insisted on, without referring to our detailed refutation of these claims. Previous *WV* articles attempted to deny that the 19 June 1996 union meeting—one day after the ICL cut relations with the LQB after failing to convince them to "leave town" and abandon the struggle—was scheduled to vote the disaffiliation of the municipal *guardas*. While seeking to disappear the fact that this meeting was shut down by armed police, *WV* nauseatingly claimed that the vote to disaffiliate the cops "never happened," despite the fact that this vote was held at the 25 July 1996 union meeting organized in the face of the repression. In response, we reproduced declarations and minutes from both organizers and opponents of the campaign to expel police from the union, as well as material from *WV*'s favorite source, the steel bosses' newspaper *Diário do Vale*, that systematically demolished each of *WV*'s successive attempts to maintain these lies. So now *WV* is silent about all this.

Instead, it follows the classic pattern: it launches a *new lie*, this time that "the LQB dropped its party press after only two issues." This is a total fabrication. First *WV* claimed the LQB had refused to put out a party press, a falsification that is amply disproved by the correspondence the ICL itself has published. When the first issue of the Brazilian comrades' *Vanguarda Operária* came out shortly after the ICL broke relations, the ICL tried to pretend it would be the last issue. After the second issue came out, they now make up the claim that the party press has been dropped. In fact the frequency of *Vanguarda Operária* compares not unfavorably to that of the press of several sections and groups of the ICL, as well as the journal *Spartacist* in its first

years. Meanwhile, the LQB has published the first issue of a theoretical journal and is publishing a pamphlet reprinting its 1995 Portuguese translation of James P. Cannon's classic essay "The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement."

Similarly with the ICL's various claims about the Internationalist Group. *WV*'s pretense that we have avoided polemics against the Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista (LBI), Artur Fernandes' mentors, is absurd. Not only have we polemicized against the LBI in every issue of *The Internationalist*, but the first issue of the LQB's *Vanguarda Operária* had a lengthy article devoted entirely to unmasking this cynical outfit, while the second featured an extensive

article denouncing the line of the LBI as well as the rest of the opportunist left on the bonapartist police "strikes" that swept Brazil last July (in addition to an article on the Congo polemicizing against the LBI's initial support to Kabila). As for *WV*'s ravings about the IG and LQB as "Brides of Christ" who are "Never to Wed" (*WV* No. 678, 14 November 1997), this piece would be pathetic if it weren't so deranged. The ICL will find out about our upcoming fusion with the LQB in the same way as the rest of the world, when it is announced in our press.

But while *WV*'s pitiful excuses for polemics against the IG and LQB go from the patently dishonest to the downright ludicrous, the ICL's actions are anything but laughable. It is obvious that the ICL leaders don't give a damn about the truth or the real stakes in the class battle in Brazil. This can easily be verified by anyone who takes the trouble to keep track of the welter of contradictions, lies and fabrications published in *Workers Vanguard* over the past period. But we're not only referring to *WV*'s increasingly reckless disregard for the truth. In seeking to scrape together smears against the Brazilian comrades in order to cover

## DECLARAÇÃO

De Geraldo Ribeiro, presidente do SPPMVR  
(Sindicato do Funcionalismo Público Municipal de Volta Redonda)  
À CUT, aos servidores e ao movimento operário

Sobre os acontecimentos do SPPMVR no dia 20-01-1997 e na última semana tenho a declarar o seguinte:

Desmentimos a calúnia que a fração de Artur fez à imprensa de que eu (Geraldo) teria usado a "justiça" contra o sindicato. Como já escrevi numa carta de 26 de julho de 1996 ao *Diário do Vale* que o jornal não publicou:

"Os que recorrem a intervenção da 'justiça' no sindicato não somos nós, dirigentes legítimos e ativistas do SPPMVR. Os trabalhadores devem limpar sua própria casa, nós rejeitamos categoricamente a intervenção dos tribunais patronais no movimento operário. Ao contrário, é o grupo golpista e pró-policia de Artur Fernandes que ataca assim os princípios elementares da independência de classe dos trabalhadores. Ao colocar o sindicato sobre intervenção governamental, como nos anos da ditadura, se ataca os direitos democráticos e sindicais de todos os trabalhadores. O sindicato é dos trabalhadores, não do governo e nem dos patrões."

**30 January declaration by Ribeiro quoting from his 26 July 1996 letter to *Diário do Vale*: "Those who resort to court intervention in the union are not us, the legitimate leaders and activists of the SPPMVR. The workers must clean their own house and we categorically reject intervention by the bosses' courts in the workers movement." Steel bosses' paper (*WV*'s favorite source) refused to publish letter.**



its own *betrayal* of the struggle to throw the cops out of the unions, the ICL leadership has been hobnobbing with some very dubious characters in Volta Redonda.

Over the past period they have had a de facto division of labor with Fernandes' mentors in the Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista to seek to isolate and defame the LQB/IG. When representatives of the ICL showed up at last August's congress of the Brazilian CUT labor federation in São Paulo with a leaflet smearing the LQB, they spent hours upon hours in discussion with the LBI. The ICL spokesmen demonstratively hung around the LBI's literature table for much of this time, including for lengthy periods when Artur Fernandes, the man *WV* rightly calls a "pro-cop thug," was sitting at it—a fact confirmed twice by one of the "interviewers" for *WV*'s latest hack job. This literature table was quite openly the command post for the operation carried out inside the congress by the LBI and the *pro-police provocateur* Fernandes, who is part of the LBI's trade-union grouping.

It's not just a matter of strange political bedfellows. In addition to having extended chummy chats with this pro-cop clot, in the presence of the very person who called in military and municipal police against union meetings in Volta Redonda and who has launched endless court actions against the Trotskyists of the LQB, in its frenzy to dig up dirt against our comrades the ICL has engaged in grossly irresponsible behavior. Thus there were at least two calls last May-June seeking to speak with authoritative spokesmen in the civil court in Volta Redonda, and on at least one occasion someone spoke with a judge. What did they talk about? In addition, Fernandes' lawyer says she received "several" calls from "journalists" for a U.S. paper during the same period asking for information about cases involving Geraldo Ribeiro. This is the same lawyer who has now launched the ominous court suit against the CLC, which the ICL refuses to defend and whose defense it denounces as a "sham." What was said in those conversations? The lawyer said she told her callers to speak with Geraldo himself. But the ICL never talked to Ribeiro.

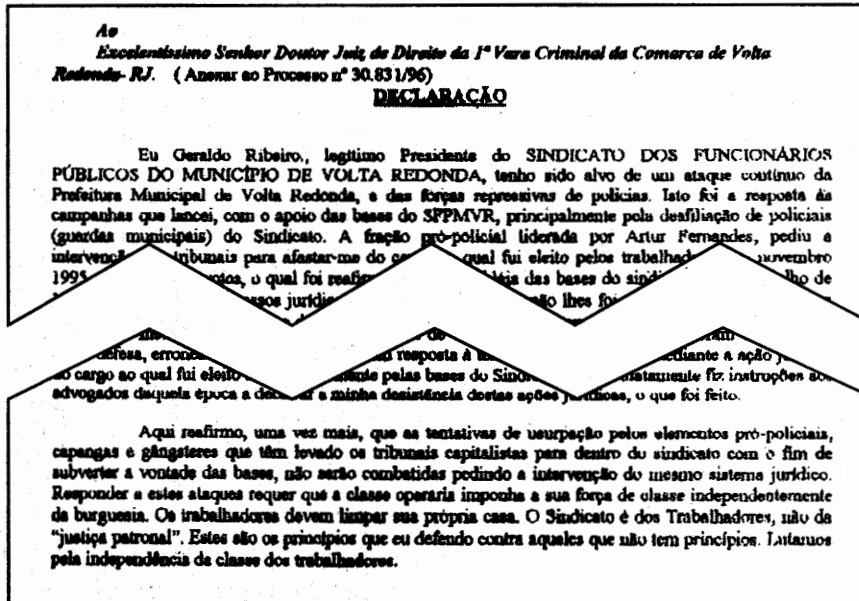
At the CUT conference, the two ICL representatives engaged in a discussion with comrades of the LQB. During this exchange, one of the ICLers said that maybe the *guardas* had left the union, but they were returning (to Fernandes' outfit, that is). Challenged as to how he would know such a "fact," which is untrue in any case, the ICLer responded that he had received this information directly from the Department of Personnel of the City of Volta Redonda. When comrade Marcello demanded to know how that could be, when even the elected president and directors of the Municipal Workers Union had been refused such information, the ICL representative said that anyone could get it. So after the CUT conference, Geraldo

Ribeiro and SFPMVR director Maria do Carmo Paes went to the Department of Personnel asking for the same information. They were told that any information about union affiliation would only be given out with the permission of the Secretary for Administration of the City of Volta Redonda. So what was the ICLers' source for this pseudo-information?

Was this all just harmless "fact-finding"? Did it ever occur to the ICL that such indiscriminate and reckless intervention with hostile intent, approaching judges and lawyers who have launched

endless suits against the class-struggle militants in the midst of a situation of repression against them, as well as hobnobbing with a "pro-cop thug," could negatively affect the defense of our comrades? The least that one can say is that the ICL leaders didn't care what the consequences of their actions might be for those facing a heavy attack by the state and its agents in Volta Redonda. The guiding principle of the new leadership of the ICL appears to be that anything goes in the interests of attacking those who are fighting for the principles of Trotskyism, which the ICL is abandoning. This political degeneration must be fought through the struggle to reforge the Fourth International.

Internationalist Group  
30 January 1998



## Class Struggle Caucus Bulletin No. 2

### Against Any Kind of "Union Tax"

*The following is a translation of Bulletin No. 2 (September 1997) of the Comitê de Luta Classista (CLC—Class Struggle Caucus, initiated by our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil). This bulletin, revealing the attempt to loot workers' pension funds and the role of the pro-police group of Artur Fernandes, was the object of the "search and seizure" order issued by a Volta Redonda court at the behest of the Fernandes clique's lawyer, Vanise Alves de Carvalho, in a suit filed by the former Municipal Secretary of the city government. The judicial mafia reacted furiously due to the commotion set off among Volta Redonda workers by the CLC leaflet's exposure of the lucrative rake-off.*

*In 1994, the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SFPMVR) sued the city government demanding that it free up workers' pension funds. The Popular Front administration had been refusing to pay into the funds, pleading lack of money. The issue has become even hotter as laid-off workers have insistently demanded access to the funds as their main source of severance pay. But when the courts finally ordered the city to pay up last June, lawyers in connivance with Fernandes smelled a rich source of loot. In the context of president Fernando Henrique Cardoso's all-out assault against public workers, the defense of pension funds has become a hot issue in Brazil, which has one of the lowest minimum wages in the world and virtually no functioning unemployment insurance. The CUT labor federation opposed Fernandes & Co.'s scheme as breaking the unions' stand against this anti-worker assault.*

*The "union tax" referred to in the leaflet is a system of government control over union finances originally established by the 1930-45 corporatist regime of Getúlio Vargas.*

In 1994 the SFPMVR (Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union) launched a legal action in the 7th federal district court to free up public workers' pension funds (FGTS). Judge Maria Salete Maccaloz issued an injunction (No. 93.0011061/6) freeing up the fund but not agreeing with the 10 percent fee for the lawyers at that time. Geraldo [Ribeiro] and Marcello Lázaro said that from then on the suit should be carried out by the union's legal department.

After the hearing Geraldo Ribeiro, in a discussion with the SFPMVR's lawyer, Dr. Vanise Alves de Carvalho, asked her to correct the error committed in the past and undertake the defense of the municipal workers herself. Vanise said she was not in a position to undertake that wide-ranging a suit. Knowing the judge's position and the incompetence of the SFPMVR's lawyer, the union hired two lawyers who would be paid 500 reais [approximately \$500] apiece per month to deal with this issue. We are opposed to the lawyers charging workers 15 percent [of recovered pension money], and maintain that the union should cover the fees.

Today, the pro-police faction of Artur, seeking the city workers' money, is charging 15 percent of funds won by the sweat and

efforts of the majority of the workers, and even charges those who are members of the union. This faction broke the contract with the lawyers who were receiving a retainer, and they have now sued the union, causing a loss of about 3,000 reais.

The pro-police faction ties city workers' hands so they can be robbed by the judicial mafia, and provides a cover for corruption in the union. Ask: 1) Why is it that up to the present no kind of balance sheet has been shown of the union's accounts? 2) What happened to the 8,032 reais in the union's savings account? 3) Why is it that none of the payments were made on the union's van, which was therefore repossessed? 4) Why did they never prove their accusations against Geraldo Ribeiro, the president legitimately elected by the city workers?

All this, city worker, is part of the faction's obscure maneuvers in the union. Don't keep quiet! Get this faction's hands out of your pockets. Don't pay the 15 percent. Don't let City Hall manipulate your union dues! Fight for a union independent of the government and bosses, and for class independence.

Point 1 of the program of the Comitê de Luta Classista says the following:

**"Complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions from the capitalist state.** Against any intervention or interference by the bourgeois 'justice' system in the union. We repudiate any and all control by the government (ministries, 'justice' system, parliament, police, etc.) over the workers movement. It is the workers who decide. Union dues must be freed from the dues check-off controlled by the state and the bosses and be paid directly to the union, so the workers will control the union's money. Against the 'union tax,' 'labor federation tax,' etc. We condemn the traitors who 'invite' the bourgeois courts into the unions."

#### Model letter refusing to pay the lawyers' fees:

To the leadership of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, enrollment number \_\_\_\_\_, from sector \_\_\_\_\_ of public workers of the municipality of Volta Redonda, employed by the city government, present this document to speak out against the payment of an amount equal to 15 percent of the pension funds in the Federal Economic Savings Bank for lawyers' fees. If this was already done, I request the amount be immediately returned. I also point out that the workers, including those who are not union members, have a right to free legal assistance. This authoritarianism does not help raise the consciousness of the working class.

The fake-Trotskyists of the LBI (Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista), which the pro-police coup faction of Artur Fernandes belongs to, are using the hands of the bourgeois state to rip off the workers' money. This means trampling on the principles of the working class.

The position of the national CUT [labor federation] for all affiliated unions is against charging lawyers' fees. ■

## Class Struggle Caucus Bulletin No. 4

# The Persecution Continues!

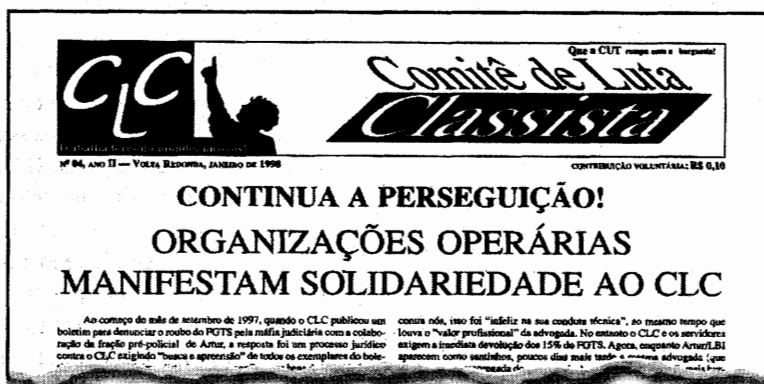
## Workers Organizations Express Solidarity with the CLC

The following is a translation of Bulletin No. 4 (January 1998) of the Comitê de Luta Classista (CLC—Class Struggle Caucus) on the international solidarity effort and recent developments in the continuing repression against the CLC. The bulletin also includes facsimiles of many of the solidarity

statements received from around the world (see "International Outcry Against Brazil Witchhunt," The Internationalist No. 4, January-February 1998). It is important to note that the high city official who originally filed the latest suit against the comrades, on behalf of the Fernandes clique's lawyer, had been the direct boss of city workers for the municipal Popular Front government against which Geraldo Ribeiro led a series of successful strikes. The "Estado Novo" (New State) referred to in the leaflet was the 1930-45 corporatist regime of Getúlio Vargas.

At the beginning of September 1997, when the CLC published a leaflet denouncing the rip-off of pension funds by the judicial mafia with the collaboration of the pro-police faction of Artur [Fernandes], the response was a court case against the CLC demanding the "search and seizure" of all copies of the leaflet. The suit's authors demanded a list of names and the confiscation of the belongings of Geraldo Ribeiro and the CLC, together with other repressive measures, basing themselves on the laws of the "Estado Novo" and the military dictatorship.

To alert the workers movement, to protest and to defend ourselves, we published a subsequent bulletin (No. 3) pointing out that this new anti-labor attack is a case of political persecution whose origins lie in the Popular Front municipal government and the campaign by [Brazilian president] Cardoso and the International Monetary Fund to loot the workers' insurance and social security funds. A clear proof: the case against the CLC was filed in the "justice" system, on behalf of Dr. Vanise, by Dr. João Silveira Neto, who was chief of staff in the municipal government of [former mayor] Baltazar and then Municipal Secretary of Public Services (municipal decrees 5955 and 6310). Vanise and Silveira Neto have a "lawyers' office" providing "services" with one foot in Artur's office and the other in the chambers of City Hall. This is yet another proof of the class-collaborationist "partnership" of the pro-police faction and the Popular Front. It



was under the municipal government of the Popular Front—composed of the PSB [the Brazilian Socialist Party of longtime bourgeois politician and regional boss of the state of Pernambuco Miguel Arraes], PT [Lula's Workers Party], PCdoB [the formerly pro-Albania Communist Party of Brazil], PCB [a rump of the formerly

pro-Moscow Brazilian Communist Party], PV (Green Party), etc.—that City Hall sent police to disperse and repress union assemblies during our campaign to disaffiliate the municipal guards from the SFPMMVR.

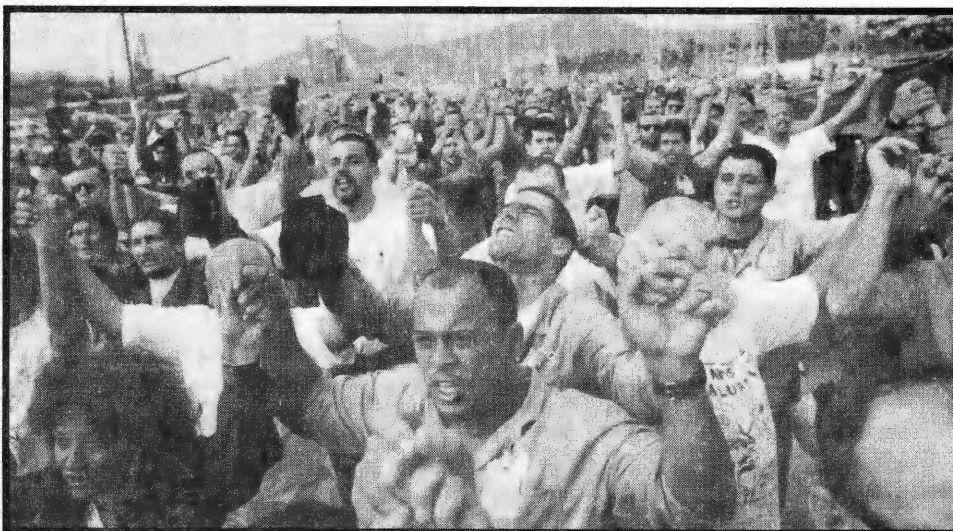
Artur Fernandes is the pro-police stooge imposed by the bourgeois courts against the will of the SFPMMVR ranks with the objective of ousting the elected president, Geraldo Ribeiro, and subjugating the union. (Artur is advised by the fake-left "Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista." In the most brazen and cynical way, the LBI's union tendency put him forward as a "star" at the Sixth Congress of the CUT labor federation in August 1997 as an "alternative" to the CUT's bureaucratization. During that same month the Fernandes faction scabbled on the Volta Redonda city workers' strike that they themselves called, since they sent their paysheets in to the city offices and received their normal pay for that day.)

### New Attack Against the CLC

With the solidarity campaign we have carried out against the repression, the CLC has been receiving solidarity and support from important labor movement organizations in Volta Redonda as well as at the national and international levels. When it found out about the campaign, the LBI came to Volta Redonda and "advised" Artur on how to wash his hands of the affair. While "clarifying" nothing whatsoever about the scandalous rip-off of pension funds which we denounced in CLC Bulletin No. 2, they immediately published a "note of clarification" supposedly criticizing their lawyer, saying that when she used the courts against us this was "unfortunate technical conduct," while simultaneously praising the lawyer's "professional value." Meanwhile, the CLC and city workers demand the immediate return of the 15 percent taken from the pension funds.

Then, while Artur/LBI adopted the guise of little saints, a

Militant oil workers during 1995 strike. Strike was repressed by Cardoso's troops, betrayed by leaders of Lula's Workers Party (PT) and CUT labor federation in interests of popular front of class collaboration.



José Luis da Conceição/O Globo

few days later the same lawyer (who continues to be employed by Artur's apparatus imposed by the bourgeois courts) refilled her suit, as part of this division of labor. Continuing the witchhunt against the CLC, this time the target is Jorge Oliveira, a black worker retired from the CSN (National Steel Company). The lawyer is also threatening to launch a case in the Fifth Criminal Court of Volta Redonda. The "partnership" of Artur's pro-police faction with the bosses and municipal authorities has made itself clear yet again.

The pro-cop faction is even setting a pattern for others: on 1 December 1997, at the request of the Popular Front that governs City Hall, the Volta Redonda "justice" system ordered the "search and seizure" of a bulletin denouncing city councilmen who voted to charge workers for garbage collection. This bulletin was supposedly distributed by a city worker who is an executive board member of the Volta Redonda Construction Workers Union. We state our complete solidarity

with this brother, whose union has declared its solidarity with the CLC. This is one more proof: the actions of the pro-police faction are not only aimed at the CLC but pave the way for the police and bourgeois courts to intervene in the workers movement.

Since the launching of the Comitê de Luta Classista, which aims to raise class consciousness and fight for the workers' conquests, the enemies of the working class have formed a broad front in the attempt to silence our voice. This new attack is part of the endless repression and court suits launched against our class-struggle positions for throwing all kinds of cops (the armed fist of the bourgeoisie) out of the SFPMVR, the CUT and all workers unions, and fighting against racism and every kind of oppression and exploitation.

The CLC cannot be confused with a trade-unionist tendency—in other words, it is not a tendency which denies political struggle and the fight against oppression. We are a revolu-

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Geronimo Pratt

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Geronimo saiu da prisão em 27 de maio de 1997, vítima de violência policial e assassinado. "Não deixamos que mais ninguém seja assassinado!"

US\$ 25.000 ao advogado James Cochran seguiu sua carreira lentamente como advogado de um grupo de advogados que Cochran passou a produzir. A virgula de James Cochran de que Cochran foi o "confessor" de assassinatos foi a chave de acesso político. Barão foi este advogado pelo primeiro "caso" "voto" à polícia: dois anos depois de Cochran (uma república: Barão de 1990) por um julgamento político. Em dezembro de 1991 Cochran foi o primeiro a ser julgado de Santa Ana produziram 2.800 páginas de depoimentos reunidos ao longo de Barão contra a procuradoria, a polícia de Los Angeles e o FBI.

Barão ocorreu desastrosamente no processo. Quando se pôs que ele nunca foi informado policial. Porém, não conseguiu de Los Angeles e criminosos condenados de Los Angeles julgados por outros a sua vez sobre o julgamento de polícia de Los Angeles desde 1965, teve pelo menos 30 vezes de Cochran com o nome de FBI em 1969 e 70, Cochran se em 1969 de Procuradoria de Justiça de Los Angeles.

Leia e assine

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**Founding meeting of the Comitê de Luta Classista (Class Struggle Caucus), June 1997, initiated by our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil. Brazilian Trotskyists have faced unrelenting capitalist state repression.**

tionary tendency within the unions. Organizing the workers must mean organizing the power of the whole working class in the fight against the *pelegos* [sellout bureaucrats] who represent the bosses, the oppressor class. In order to do this, we must counterpose revolutionary class-struggle politics to the pro-capitalist politics of the bureaucrats.

The CLC's policy is not only to organize, but also to denounce and fight against those who stand as enemies of the working class. In order for the unions to be one of the instruments for raising the workers' consciousness, making them understand the need to free themselves from capitalism's chains, what is indispensable is revolutionary politics and a revolutionary leadership, and this is possible only through the fight to build a revolutionary workers party.

The CLC's struggle with respect to the unions is above the mediocrity of the bureaucrats, who use the "union machine" simply for their own benefit and to serve the bosses, dividing and betraying the workers. An example is the agreement made by the São Paulo Metal Workers Union, dominated by Medeiros' yellow "Força Sindical" federation, which sold out the workers in a sweetheart deal with the bosses to cut wages and carry out layoffs.

Any proletarian organization which seeks to fight against these types needs to do so on a revolutionary class-struggle program which defends women, blacks, Indi-

ans, homosexuals, children and youth as part of the class-struggle fight and an important part of its program against any form of oppression. Only in this way, rising up as the "tribune of the people," will it build the authority to lead the struggle of the oppressed and exploited against capitalism.

The pro-police faction completely ignored the campaign for winning back the job of Regina Célia, who was fired because of the racism of City Hall. This is no accident: the LBI publicly attacks the activities which our comrades organized in defense of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the black journalist condemned to death, and against the racist death penalty in the U.S. Our comrades brought this campaign to Brazil, a concrete example of the internationalist and proletarian struggle against racial oppression. In August 1995 there was a demonstration for Mumia Abu-Jamal in Volta Redonda, organized by our comrades of Luta Metalúrgica (now the LQB, Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil) and the SFPMVR under Geraldo's leadership. In contrast, the LBI does not campaign against special oppression even when it affects workers (their newspapers do not discuss even one such case). It constantly echoes

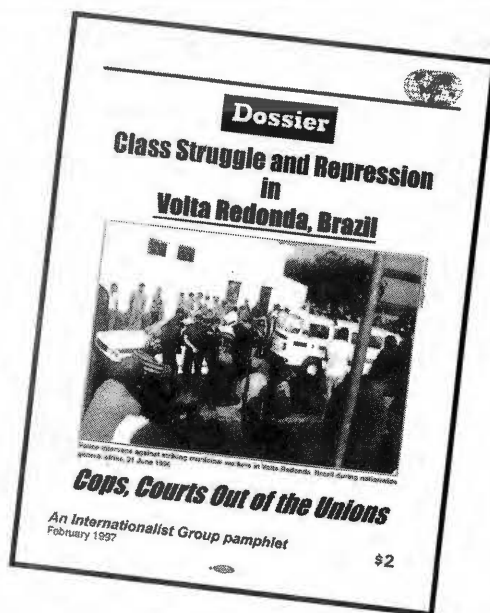
the bigotry and racism of the bourgeoisie, for example attacking the Mumia campaign and demonstration, writing that "it was organized as a big party with music and dancing." This is like when the racists say, referring to Brazilian blacks, "it's something for the colored people." The LBI ignores thousands of signatures [for the campaign] collected among the workers.

The types of oppression we have mentioned above directly affect the proletariat, with its multiethnic composition of men and women of various ages, who are the victims of all kinds of prejudices and who must be defended by organiza-

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tions which claim to be proletarian. Meanwhile, the only thing the LBI and Artur have passionately defended, in their dirty way, is the presence of cops in general and municipal *guardas* in unions together with the workers. The LBI as "theoretician and advisor" and Artur as the "practitioner" not only "defend" the *guardas*, but revive "Zubatovism" in the labor movement. (At the beginning of this century, Zubatov was the inspirer and organizer of Zubatovism or "police socialism" in Russia. He founded phony workers organizations under the tutelage of the police, with the aim of keeping the workers away from revolutionary activity. Zubatov acted directly inside the unions, scheming against the Bolsheviks and the lives of all those who had revolutionary political objectives in organizing the workers.) During the recent "strikes" of the cops (the armed fist of the bourgeoisie against the exploited and oppressed), the LBI wanted the "lower echelons" of the Military Police to "accept the discipline of an anti-capitalist orientation" (*Luta Operária*, November 1997)! This means spreading a criminal reformist illusion and once again reveals the LBI's attitude towards the victims of the bourgeois state's uniformed racist assassins. This makes it clear for the workers movement what the real intentions of the LBI and Artur are with regard to the intervention of the bourgeois courts calling for banning the CLC's leaflets.

**The CLC calls for the class independence of the workers and fights against all forms of collaboration with the ruling class!**

**The judicial attack against the CLC has caused a clamor of protest extending from Brazil to South Africa, El Salvador and the United States.**

The workers of Brazil face the brutal austerity plan of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, instigated by the International Monetary Fund and Wall Street bankers in response to the crisis of world financial markets. To impose the starvation plan, the capitalists can rely on Cardoso, who sent tanks and soldiers against the oil workers' strike two years ago.

The one refinery the army did not occupy in 1995 was the plant at Duque de Caxias (in Rio de Janeiro state), because of Caxias workers' reputation for organized and militant resistance. However, the courts intervened against the union and seized control of its bank account. Protesting the new repression against the CLC, the Duque de Caxias oil workers union issued a statement "vehemently repudiating state intervention against the workers' freedom of organization," denouncing the "suspension of the rights of the union's elected president" and stating that "persecution of leaders and various forms of intervention in combative unions has been a constant in recent years, particularly under the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso."

In a similarly firm and energetic tone, the Rio de Janeiro Glass, Ceramic and Optical Workers Union and the Homeless Workers Movement protested against the bourgeois courts' authoritarianism, stating that the courts' aim is to "infringe on the workers' organizations" and demanding: "Down with the intervention!"

Workers in Belo Horizonte (state of Minas Gerais) also supported the campaign and protested capitalist justice. In her

protest statement, Elizabete Xavier Diniz, a supporter of the "Critical Analysis of the Minas Gerais Education Workers Union" (opposition to the current union leadership), writes that "this kind of posture by the state takes us back to the recent past of repressive and anti-democratic practices aimed at cutting off the freedom of speech and legitimacy of the movement for the struggle of the working class."

The Oil Workers Union of the State of Minas Gerais, which like the rest of this sector has been the target of attacks by Cardoso, who seeks to suppress their organizations, demands that "the right of free association and opinion must be maintained and differences among the workers must be resolved by the workers themselves," demanding as well: "Down with the intervention!"

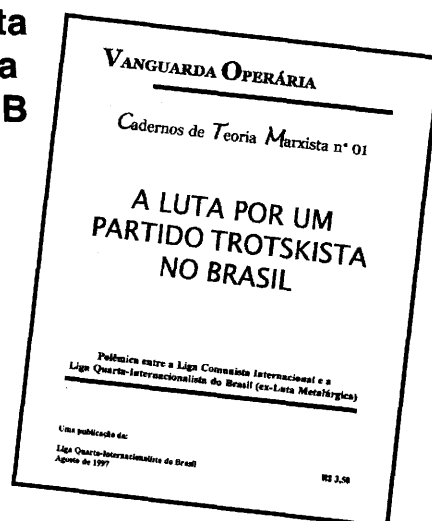
From Rio de Janeiro, the Committee Against Persecution and for the Freedom of Political Prisoners in Brazil denounces the fact that Cardoso's "democracy" maintains "111 political prisoners and victims of persecution," while calling on the workers to fight for "dropping the charges against the CLC, canceling the verdicts against members of the Landless Peasants and Homeless movements, and freeing imprisoned members of the [Chilean] MIR and [Salvadoran] FMLN" in Brazil.

Also from Rio de Janeiro, the Committee for a Proletarian Culture Center declares: "we find it intolerable that members of the labor movement or people who should be at its service use the instruments and laws of the Bourgeois State to instigate persecution against class-struggle fighters."

In Volta Redonda, the unions of Hotel and Restaurant Workers, Domestic Workers and Construction Workers protested with solidarity messages noting "the deliberate intention of infringing on workers' organization as occurred for several years under the Military Dictatorship," stating "the day will come when nobody can succeed in silencing the roaring voice of the streets," and demanding "Down with intervention!"

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As occurred during a previous period in the campaign of repression against the class-struggle militants, some of the most powerful protests came from South Africa. An 8 October 1997 statement from the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU), which has 120,000 members, stated: "For many years, as municipal workers we fought, with others, a brutal racist regime here in South Africa," where "the labour movement...suffered many losses at the hands of the brutal police and state machinery." SAMWU hails the CLC's "courageous war on racism" and our fight for the "right to publish information vital to workers of Brazil particularly, and the world in general," demanding: "Down with the charges against Cde Geraldo Ribeiro and the CLC."

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and the National Union of Miners (NUM) of the same country also sent vigorous protests against the new repression against the CLC. The South African Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) denounced "the latest attack...by the combined dark forces of capital and state machinery" and called on those responsible to stop anti-union repression, "lest they burn themselves in the fire they shall encounter in return."

Stating that "International Solidarity knows no borders," the Association of Telecommunications Workers of El Salvador (ASTTEL) wrote to "condemn this whole new escalation of repression against the unionists of Volta Redonda, Brazil, and specifically against brother Geraldo Ribeiro and the Comitê de Luta Classista." Also from El Salvador, the FEASIES labor federation issued a statement defending Ribeiro and the CLC against the repression. When the president of El Salvador attacked representatives of ASTTEL and FEASIES on television, calling them "traitors" and "inhuman" for denouncing the terrible abuses against workers in the factories there (many of whom are women workers), Geraldo and the class-struggle militants defended the Salvadoran brothers and sisters.

From the other side of the Pacific Ocean, the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees in the Philippines wrote that "we join against racist employers who are in cahoots with the repressive government in sowing terror among municipal workers," stating: "Your struggle is not far from ours. We also [face] racial discrimination against the Cordillera peoples and the Muslim Moros of the South" of the Philippines. This Filipino workers group calls for facing "this disorderly new world order" through "collective action and international solidarity." In New Zealand, the two labor federations wrote to protest the repression against the Comitê de Luta Classista. The acting secretary of the New Zealand Trade Union Federation (NZTUF) sent a protest to Brazil's interior minister, and the secretary of the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU) also signed a protest statement against the attacks in Volta Redonda.

In the United States, a solidarity statement to Ribeiro and the CLC from Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 399 (which represents combative janitors and hospital workers in Los Angeles) observed that this is "the eighth legal action against you. This is an attempt to use laws from the

military dictatorship to censor and silence the voice of union activists, including the legitimate elected president of the Volta Redonda municipal workers union who has been the victim of court intervention, armed police shutting down union meetings and repeated acts of repression because of the struggles he has led." The statement also denounced the threat "to seize your belongings and the outrageous threat to demand the names of all the activist[s] who exercised their rights by publishing leaflets to inform the workers and defend their interests."

In the San Francisco Bay Area, in California, longshore union Local 10 (ILWU) denounced "the vicious witchhunt" which follows previous repression aimed at Ribeiro "because you played a central role in carrying out the will of your membership to disaffiliate the guardas (police) from your union." Citing an earlier protest by ILWU Local 10, it underlined: "As we stated then and reiterate now, we support your principled struggle. Police have been banned from membership in our union since they killed workers in the 1934 Maritime Strike. And today, the brutal killings of street children in Brazil by police don't go unnoticed here." The statement also referred to government repression against the dockers' strike in Santos [in São Paulo state] several months ago.

On the East Coast of the USA, a solidarity statement in Spanish and Portuguese from the Independent Farmworkers Center noted: "Farm workers here are predominantly Latin immigrants, and we have suffered repression and intimidation in our countries of origin. This kind of repression continues when we arrive in the United States. We believe the struggle you are carrying out is a great example for other countries and popular movements internationally." An eloquent statement from the Latino Workers Center of New York said "we understand only too well the brutal methods utilized by the police and the state when their interests are threatened" and ended: "Demand that ALL charges against the CLC and comrade Ribeiro be dropped right away!!!"

The broad support from around the world resulted from the international solidarity campaign carried out by our comrades of the Internationalist Group and Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil. Solidarity statements were also received from the International Bolshevik Tendency, the Freedom Socialist Party and radical historian Howard Zinn in the U.S., the Communist Workers Party (PCT) [in Brazil] and LabourNet in Britain. We thank all the organizations and individuals who have defended the CLC against state repression. ■

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# After Solidarity Campaign Defeats Suit Against CLC Denounce Ninth Court Action Against Brazilian Trotskyist Workers

Ever since its inception, the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil has faced an unrelenting barrage of repression. The LQB was formed two years ago by the largely black Luta Metalúrgica group of metal workers in Volta Redonda, Brazil, the site of the largest steel mill in Latin America. LQB supporters waged a determined battle to remove municipal *guardas* (police) from the Municipal Workers Union of Volta Redonda (SFPMVR). For carrying out this key class battle for the independence of the workers movement from the capitalist state, the Brazilian Trotskyists have come under assault from the cops and courts, as well as gangster attacks by pro-police provocateurs.

The most recent case was a lawsuit aimed at banning leaflets of the Comitê de Luta Classista (CLC—the Class Struggle Caucus initiated by the LQB) and stifling their voice. This outrageous court action was met with a wide-ranging campaign of labor solidarity, both in Brazil and internationally, which finally forced the dropping of the suit. However, just as soon as this attack was beaten down, the repression against the revolutionaries escalated again. A judicial official showed up at the house of Geraldo Ribeiro, a member of the LQB and CLC and elected president of the SFPMVR, to demand that he appear at an April 9 court hearing of charges against him and another LQB supporter, Marcello Carega.

This is the *ninth* legal action against the Brazilian Trotskyist workers in the last two years! The pro-cop elements went to the bosses' courts in mid-1996 to oust Ribeiro as SFPMVR president, while Carega was arrested for leading militant pickets in a general strike that June. Both cases were eventually withdrawn after international protests. The timing of the latest frame-up makes it dramatically clear that there is a concerted campaign to hit them with one blow after another from the apparatus of capitalist state repression. The LQB and CLC denounce this new provocation and demand, as they have from the outset: Cops and courts out of the workers movement!

Last September a lawsuit was launched against Ribeiro and the CLC demanding the "search and seizure" of a CLC leaflet denouncing the theft of workers' pension funds by the "judicial mafia" and the pro-police clique installed by the courts over the objections of the membership of the SFPMVR. The case was brought by the lawyer employed by the pro-police group of Artur Fernandes (advised by the "Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista"), the instrument of the city bosses' vendetta against Ribeiro and the LQB for leading the struggle to oust the cops from the union and for exposing the racism of the Popular Front city administration. The case was filed by a top city official who was the chief of staff of the former mayor and secretary of public services.

A court officer was sent to the Brazilian activists' office to search for the leaflets, and the lawsuit threatened to seize

the belongings of Ribeiro and the CLC and to demand a list of caucus members' names. In November the case was re-registered in court, this time naming retired black steel worker Jorge de Oliveira, while threatening criminal prosecution. As the CLC noted in a January bulletin, this attack set an ominous pattern: in December 1997, the Popular Front city government obtained a court order for the "search and seizure" of a leaflet by a construction workers union leader criticizing city councilmen who voted to charge workers for garbage collection.

An international campaign of solidarity brought forth protest against the repression aimed at the CLC, from Brazilian oil, construction and domestic workers to the South African miners and metal workers unions, U.S. longshoremen, janitors and immigrant workers groups, Salvadoran phone workers and municipal workers in the Philippines. As a result of this outpouring, on March 30 the CLC was informed that the pro-police group's lawyer had withdrawn her suit and the court had declared it null and void. This was a victory for international workers solidarity, but the state wants to cancel this victory.

On the very next day, March 31, a court official came to comrade Ribeiro's house with a court demand that he appear on April 9 for a hearing. *We denounce this new attack by the bourgeois state against the LQB!* The case is part of a cycle in which gangster attacks and police interventions are followed by court prosecution against the Brazilian Trotskyists. Not only did this prosecution suddenly surface immediately after the previous case had to be withdrawn, the demand to appear in court was made just three days after the CLC published a new bulletin denouncing the role of the Fernandes pro-police clique and the "judicial mafia."

*The Internationalist* and the League for the Fourth International, of which the LQB is the Brazilian section, call on the workers movement to *defend Ribeiro and Carega against this new state attack.*

—6 April 1997

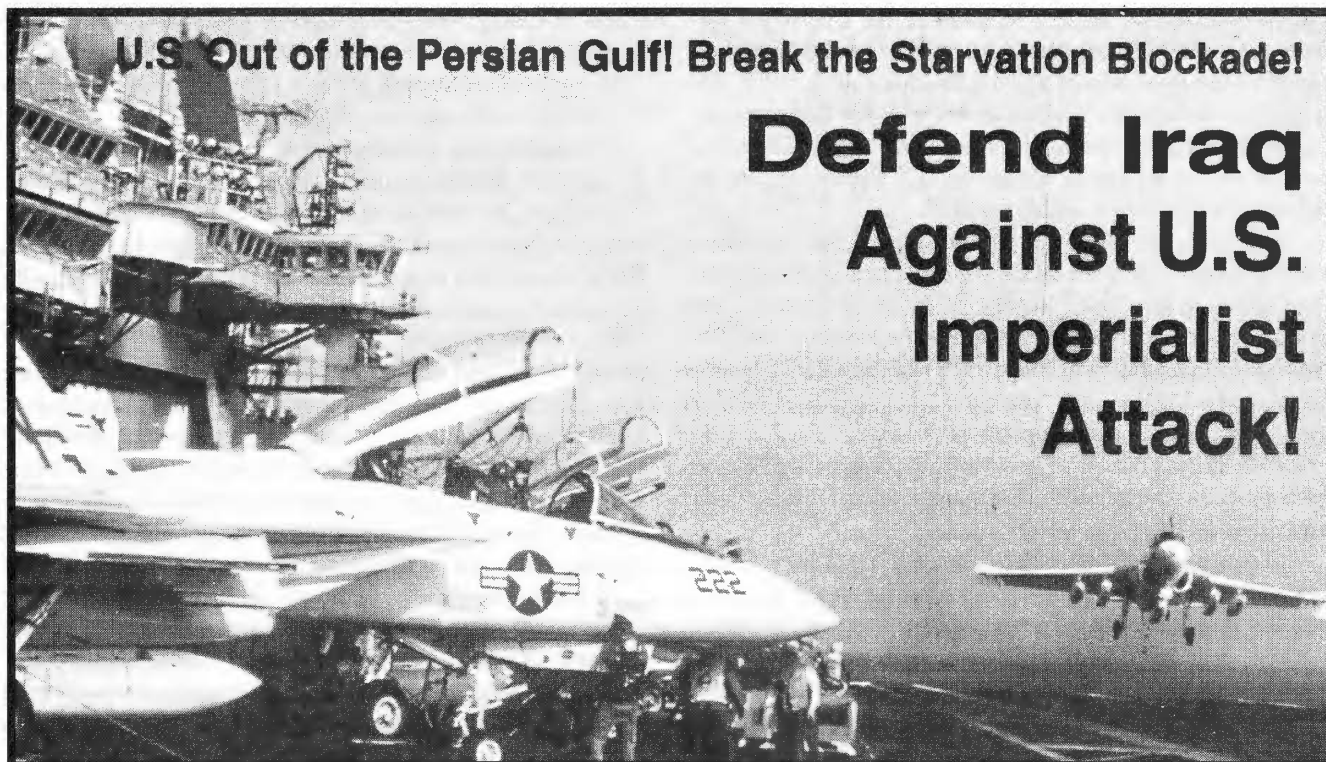
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## **Defend Iraq Against U.S. Imperialist Attack!**

FEBRUARY 27—War drums have been beating in Washington for the last four months. The rulers of the United States, who brag of being the “sole remaining superpower” on the face of the earth, have been gearing up for a “showdown” with Iraq. Unless Saddam Hussein would bow to the U.S. diktat and allow “United Nations” military spies free run of the Near Eastern country, American president Bill Clinton would unleash a rain of death. This was no idle threat coming from the self-appointed global policeman. The Pentagon dispatched no less than three nuclear aircraft carriers (the *Nimitz*, *Independence* and *George Washington*) to the Persian Gulf, where they were joined by a British carrier (the *Invincible*), while hundreds of U.S. warplanes armed with thousands of bombs stood ready, and more than 30,000 U.S. military personnel were moved into the region. U.S. war chiefs leaked plans for an initial around-the-clock bombing campaign lasting for days with the intensity of the 1991 aerial bombardment of Baghdad, and which would be continued at will. This was all supposed to force Iraq to allow “inspections” looking for chemical and biological weapons.

This entire orchestrated onslaught is a crude exercise in imperial power threatening to crush a semi-colonial country. All the talk of controlling “weapons of mass destruction” is just kicking sand in the eyes. The enforcer of this prohibition is the superpower that is armed to the teeth with nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. The U.S. is the only country that has ever dropped an atomic bomb in wartime, killing tens of thousands of Japanese and Korean civilians in Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Saddam Hussein might use the chemical weapons that he might have? The U.S. plastered Vietnam with chemical

weapons such as napalm and Agent Orange, in a slaughter that killed millions of Vietnamese. The war danger comes straight from the U.S. and its NATO and UN allies/flunkeys who pose as “peacemakers” even as they rattle their cruise missiles and engage in bullying aircraft carrier diplomacy. The U.S. says that the latest Iraq crisis, like the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War, is about the bloody tyrant Saddam who holds sway on the Tigris and Euphrates. No, it is about blood-drenched U.S. imperialism trying to enforce its untrammled domination of the world.

On February 22, UN general secretary Kofi Annan signed an agreement with Saddam Hussein in the Iraqi capital, following “red lines” dictated by the White House and hand-delivered by U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright. According to this “deal,” the UNSCOM “inspection teams” will have a license to penetrate anywhere in the country, including into so-called presidential sites, presumably searching for CB weapons in Saddam’s bedroom or basement. If Washington holds off on launching its bombers and missiles, it’s clear to all that this is only an intermission. Clinton announced that he would keep the U.S. military in the Persian Gulf “in force” and threatened that if the accord broke down (i.e., when the UN “inspectors” stage a provocation on instructions from New York and Washington, as they have done in the past), then the U.S. would strike “at a time, place and manner of our choosing.” The UN is currently drafting a resolution embodying this threat in diplomatic language. From the standpoint of the U.S. rulers, the Annan-Hussein agreement just buys them some time to get their capitalist-imperialist “allies” into line and to overcome resistance on the home front.

In this conflict, it is the duty of workers, opponents of

**Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

imperialism, and all those who stand on the side of the oppressed against their oppressors to take a forthright stand on behalf of the Iraqi people against the threatened attack. All appeals to the UN for negotiations are worse than useless—they are playing into the hands of the warmongers. The Internationalist Group calls to *defeat the U.S. war moves* and to *defend Iraq against imperialist attack!*

Moreover, the issue goes beyond stopping the threatened military slaughter. For the last seven and a half years, Iraq has been subjected to a brutal imperialist economic embargo and blockade, enforced by a U.S. armada in the Persian Gulf. This “peaceful” strangulation of Iraq, which was supported by many liberals and reformists as an “alternative” to bombing, is itself an *act of war*. UN “aid” teams supervise a program of planned starvation, doling out rations of less than 2,000 calories per day to the population. We demand: *Down with the imperialist blockade! Break the starvation embargo!*

Meanwhile, UN “inspectors” careen around Iraq in their 4x4 vehicles like yuppie sheriffs looking for weapons, to ensure that Iraq is disarmed the next time the imperialists decide to strike. U.S. planes patrol the skies, periodically shooting down Iraqi planes and bombing Baghdad every time that American presidents feel a need to show their strength. We demand: *Down with the deadly sanctions against Iraq! U.S./UN/NATO out of the Persian Gulf!*

And while the military vise on Iraq is being tightened by the generals and capitalist rulers in Washington, we have the spectacle of bourgeois politicians speaking from the platform at antiwar demonstrations. The prime example is Ramsey Clark, who was attorney general under Lyndon Johnson during the Vietnam War as antiwar protesters were beaten bloody by cops and feds outside the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago.

Such liberals have at most *tactical* differences with the current policy emanating from the U.S. government. As Marxists we understand, as history has repeatedly shown, that the fight against imperialist war must be waged through *class* struggle. We warn: *Today's Democratic “doves” are tomorrow's (and yesterday's) hawks! For workers action against imperialist war!*

### U.S. Imperialist Rulers Want War

What is behind the current war drive against Iraq? Why is Washington so intent in going after Saddam Hussein? Needless to say, there are scores of capitalist dictators around the world who are just as bloody, but are fulsomely backed by the U.S.? Is it because last October, Baghdad expelled some U.S. weapons “inspectors,” saying they were spies? Is it because after that Iraqi authorities refused to allow UNSCOM teams to “inspect” some installations which they declared high-security or presidential sites? Hardly. Those are just Clinton's pretexts.

In the first place, the UNSCOM teams are nothing but spies, and everyone knows it. Not only do they report to UN headquarters on New York's East River, their “inspectors” on loan from the U.S. and British military directly brief their superiors on the Potomac and the Thames. In fact, as the *Wall Street Journal* (11 February) reported, there have been cases of “American Unscm

inspectors telephoning their offices in Washington directly from Baghdad to pass on information, using U.S.-supplied phones.” They are in effect forward spotters, providing a list of targets to be taken out in the next air strikes.

Secondly, Iraq is hardly the only country to insist on “sovereign sites” that are not open to inspection. The *United States*, for example, has massive stockpiles of chemical weapons, thousands of times more than anything Iraq might have. Utah is full of them, for example, as attested to by the dead sheep who periodically appear when various gases leak out. But under the Chemical Weapons Convention, which the U.S. has still not ratified, it can refuse to authorize inspections. *Israel* also has stockpiles of chemical weapons, as well as *hundreds* of nuclear warheads. It has refused to sign the nuclear proliferation treaty, or to ratify the chemical weapons treaty, and it certainly won't let anyone inspect its nuclear installations at Dimona, saying disingenuously “our nuclear deterrent has got nothing to do with proliferation” (*Financial Times*, 24 February). In fact, the Zionist rulers have locked up former nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu in solitary confinement for more than a decade because he revealed their atomic arsenal.

Another argument is that Saddam Hussein has actually used chemical weapons, against Kurds in 1988. Of course, he was then an ally of the United States in the drawn-out Iran-Iraq war, during which time the U.S. supplied Iraq with the organisms used to produce anthrax, botulism and other diseases. For that matter, *Britain* not only has chemical weapons, it used them, *in Iraq*, in an aerial bombardment of villages in 1920 to put down a burgeoning popular revolt against its imperialist dominance of the country. Winston Churchill, then minister of war, commented haughtily: “I am strongly in favor of using poisoned gas against uncivilized



Saddam Hussein

tribes" (quoted in the *Militant*, 2 March 1998).

The real aim of the U.S.-orchestrated campaign of war threats and ultimately military action against Iraq is to graphically demonstrate the *world domination of Yankee imperialism*. The American rulers, from Wall Street to the White House and the Pentagon, deem themselves to be "masters of the universe," and they want to show everyone who's the boss. An important part of this is control of petroleum supplies. Washington wants to have its hand on the oil spigot, so it can turn it on or off at will. This is directed not so much at Iraq, although the Seven Sisters oil monopolies are still upset over the nationalization of their properties there, as at the U.S.' *imperialist allies and rivals*. The U.S. imports very little oil from the region, which goes overwhelmingly to Japan and Europe.

Oil supplies were a major issue in 1990-91. In that respect, the U.S. is more interested in former Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus, as American oil companies pour money into Baku and Kazakhstan. A new "great game" is developing over access to Central Asian oil, with wrangling over pipelines (actual and projected) through Chechnya, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan. This is behind Washington's recent halting steps toward rapprochement with Iran, and its annoyance over deals between French and other European oil companies and the mullahs' regime in Teheran. In fact, Washington might like to *increase* Iraqi oil production just now in order to drive the OPEC price down even more than its present low level.

What's behind the obsession to "punish" Iraq is Washington's desire to demonstrate its global power. Far from "stumbling" into war, as liberals lament (for example, an article on "Drifting Toward the Use of Force" by retired U.S. army colonel Daniel Smith of the Center for Defense Information), the government's policy is quite deliberate. Like the British in the 19th century, Clinton would *like* a "nice tidy little war" just now. It might help the administration out of its current troubles over "Monicagate" in Washington. But mainly it would be used to discipline the U.S.' imperialist allies and rivals.

Thus it goes hand in hand with current plans to expand NATO. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was always intended to "keep the Germans down and the Russians out" of Europe, while ensuring U.S. dominance. Although the Soviet Union has been destroyed by counterrevolution, these goals remain the cornerstone of U.S. policy in Europe. Thus a key objective of the present campaign against Iraq is to force the French and Russian rulers to acquiesce to Washington's plans. At a NATO "defense" seminar in Munich, German chancellor Kohl's representatives made it clear they would toe the line, offering up German air force bases for staging attacks on Iraq even though no one asked them to.

### For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

While the Russian and French governments kept dragging their heels on U.S. demands for UN approval of bombing Iraq, the Arab governments were also notably reticent. Although they were pliant enough in 1990-91, allowing their territories to be used as staging grounds and symbolically joining the U.S.-led anti-Iraq "coalition," this time only Kuwait would



Internationalist photo

**Internationalist Group at February 28 NYC protest against U.S. war moves against Iraq.**

agree. (Kuwait was set up in the 1920s as a British protectorate in order to put the squeeze on Iraq, controlling its narrow corridor to the sea below Basra. It has played the same function ever since, while the discovery and exploitation of huge oil supplies has allowed the arrogant rulers of this tiny sheikdom to lord it over a population consisting mainly of immigrant workers without rights. Contrary to the liberals who lamented over "poor little Kuwait" in 1990-91, Marxists shed no tears for this imperialist-dominated enclave.)

The Arab rulers' reluctance was due to the mounting anger over U.S. actions in the Near East. Clinton and Albright have acted as protectors of the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu, as this Zionist hawk brazenly rips up the Oslo "peace" accords, sponsoring new settlements and refusing to turn over land to even the most limited Palestinian "administration." Those accords were no victory for the Palestinian population, which continues to suffer under the boot of the Zionist army, together with the well-armed Zionist settlers, while the West Bank and Gaza Strip are economically strangled by Israel. Yasir Arafat, head of the "Palestine Authority," is the administrator of a big prison camp for Palestinians. As if to demonstrate this anew, Arafat's police shut down a number of radio stations and banned all pro-Iraqi demonstrations on orders from Washington.

The assorted sheiks, emirs, kings, colonels and presidents who rule over the Arab masses were concerned that a new U.S. bombing campaign against Iraq, inevitably producing civilian casualties which Washington refers to cynically as "collateral damage," could awaken furious protests among their subjects. Thus they preferred to contain Hussein through "negotiations." Those who genuinely wish to combat imperialism, however, must fight to sweep away *all* the capitalist rulers of the Near East, from the Zionist militarists to the nationalist officers to the mullahs and antediluvian royalty, through international socialist revolution. In doing so, it is necessary to seek proletarian unity with the Hebrew-speaking workers, recognizing the right of self-deter-

mination of all the peoples of the region and joining together in common class struggle against the imperialists and their satraps.

Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein is a typical bourgeois nationalist butcher. His hands are red with the blood of Kurds, Shi'ites and Communists that he has slaughtered over the decades of his rule. He came to power in league with U.S. rulers, who feared the kind of mass uprising against imperialist domination that swept Iraq in 1958, and in which the Iraqi Communist Party betrayed. However, as Stalinist nationalists the ICP has always sought to make common cause with bourgeois politicians rather than fighting for international socialist revolution. And thus it sacrificed its once considerable support in the heavily Kurdish north on the altar of Iraqi nationalism, whose principal vehicle was the Ba'ath Party now led by Saddam. This ultimately led to the arrest and execution of scores of ICP members and leaders.

Authentic communists oppose any political support to the regime of Saddam Hussein and fight for the right of self-determination for the Kurdish people, carved up by the imperialists among four capitalist states (Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey), in the aftermath of World War I, and for a socialist republic of united Kurdistan. This requires a struggle against the several bourgeois states which today brutally oppress the Kurdish minorities, as well as against the rival clans and bourgeois Kurdish nationalists who have sold out the Kurds to one enemy after another. That struggle must be waged centrally against the overlord that dominates the entire region, U.S. imperialism. Yet the various Kurdish nationalists and Iraqi oppositionists instead signed up with Washington during the 1990-91 Gulf War and actually became paid agents on the payroll of imperialism. This can only lead to tragedy for the Kurds, as the CIA backing for the Barzanis' Kurdish Democratic Party did in the 1970s, and as the cynical "Operation Provide Comfort" did in 1991.

Communists fight for the unity of the Kurdish working people with the laboring masses of Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria in common revolutionary class struggle, to bring down the Saddam Husseins and all the exploiters and oppressors. The fate of all the toilers of the region, no matter what their nationality or country, is intimately bound up together. Vital resources from water to oil can only be equitably shared in a *socialist federation of the Near East*. As the Bolshevik revolutionary Leon Trotsky explained in his theory and program of permanent revolution, in countries of belated capitalist development in the imperialist epoch the tasks of national liberation, agrarian revolution and democracy can today be achieved only through workers revolution, supported by the peasantry, which would necessarily undertake socialist tasks and must extend internationally to the heartland of imperialism. For this what is required above all is the leadership of communist parties built in the struggle to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International.

### **Fight Imperialist War Moves with Workers Action!**

In the last several weeks, as Clinton and his war chiefs were daily escalating their threats against Iraq, making it clear to all that an attack was imminent, they decided to do a little preparation of "public opinion" with a phony "town meeting"

in the style of an Oprah Winfrey talk show, to be televised on the "bombs over Baghdad" network CNN. But much to their surprise, widespread skepticism in the population and vocal opposition to the war moves broke through even this tightly controlled format. As liberals and conservatives from the "select" audience politely questioned Albright and war secretary Dick Cohen, student and leftist antiwar protesters chanted opposition from the bleachers. Around the country, teach-ins and protest demonstrations against the war threat spread, drawing crowds of several hundred each in numerous places.

Although the numbers were relatively small, this was an indication of the potential for mobilizing large-scale opposition to the imperialist war moves. However, while expressing "dissent" over particular government policies these demonstrations were in fact tied to the imperialist system that produces these endless reactionary wars, and to the capitalist politicians—Democrat and Republican alike—who will whip up support for the next round of war-mongering. In fact, it is the Democrats, who pose as the "people's party" of American capitalism, that have most often unleashed imperialist wars, from the massive carnage of World Wars I and II to Korea and Vietnam to Clinton's invasions of Haiti and the former Yugoslavia. Usually the butchery is carried out in the name of "human rights" and classless "democracy," the bourgeois catchwords appealed to by many antiwar organizers.

U.S. rulers are still wary of a "Vietnam syndrome" in the population. As the *New York Times* (9 February) headlined: "History's Moral for U.S.—Goliath Can Lose, Too." What they are worried about is the bourgeois defeatist sentiment produced by a *losing* imperialist war, as when the peasants and workers of Indochina defeated and drove out the tens of thousands of U.S. troops in a massive expeditionary force, the carpet-bombing U.S. Air Force and the million-strong South Vietnamese puppet army. The Vietnam battle that lasted three decades, from 1945 to 1975, was fundamentally a *class* war, which resulted in the establishment of a workers state, albeit bureaucratically deformed. Washington is still smarting from the images of the North Vietnamese smashing through the gates of the presidential palace in Saigon, just as it is over the images of armed Cuban workers parading off *gusano* prisoners in the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion.

Eight decades ago, at the outbreak of WWI, the Russian revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin declared that the only way to combat the wars unleashed by the capitalist rulers was through class war of the working people against their exploiters and oppressors: while many reformist "socialists" lined up with "their" capitalist "fatherland," and many centrist socialists turned to impotent pacifist appeals to the bourgeois rulers, Lenin's Bolsheviks called on the victims to rise up against their oppressors. *Turn the imperialist war into civil war* was their battle cry. Out of this struggle came the 1917 October Revolution, giving rise to the first workers state in history. Isolated in an economically backward, predominantly peasant country and subjected to relentless imperialist pressure, in the absence of successful workers revolutions in Europe that could come to its aid, the young Soviet republic suffered bureaucratic degeneration, as political power was seized by a conservative nationalist bureaucracy under Stalin.



Trampling on the program of world socialist revolution—the program of Lenin, Trotsky and the early Communist International—Stalin put forward the pipedream of building “socialism in one country.” This anti-Marxist dogma meant opposing socialist revolution elsewhere, which the Stalinists did with bloody determination and disastrous results, from Spain in the 1930s to Indonesia in the 1950s and Chile in the 1970s. This policy, codified in the watchword of “popular front” with sections of the bourgeoisie, paved the way ultimately for the destruction of the Soviet Union and the bureaucratically deformed workers states of East Europe as the imperialist bourgeoisies refused to “peacefully coexist” and kept up the pressure to wipe out any kind of workers state. The final destruction of the Soviet Union was heralded by Gorbachev’s withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 in the vain hope of appeasing the U.S. imperialists. A year later, the Kremlin treacherously approved the imperialist blockade of Iraq and the subsequent Desert Slaughter. The subsequent counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union greatly emboldened the imperialists.

Today the imperialists’ drive for counterrevolution is being waged against China, Vietnam, Cuba and North Korea, where the Stalinist rulers continue to dangerously foster pro-capitalist forces. Trotskyists fight for revolutionary defense of the deformed workers states, through proletarian political revolution in the capitalist countries. In this struggle we call on the workers movement to fight against the vicious Yankee imperialist embargo/blockade of Cuba, by which Washington has sought to undo the revolution and starve the population into submission for more than three and a half decades.

In the face of the current U.S./UN offensive against Iraq, we call for *workers action against imperialist war moves*. While reformists seek to pressure bourgeois liberals to lobby Washington, as communists we seek to mobilize the class *power* of the proletariat in action. This can take the form of *workers demonstrations, hot-cargoing of war matériel, and strike action against imperialist attack*. Such actions are possible. On the first day of the bombing of Iraq in 1991, there were strikes of several hours, largely spontaneous, in a number of factories in the area of Milano, Italy. In France, a couple of weeks later, CGT union dockers in Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône, an installation of the port of Marseille-Fos, refused to load 29 containers with arms and munitions bound for the Gulf. The fascists accused the Communist Party (PCF) and CGT union federation of “permanent treason against the French army in combat,” and the CGT dock workers local in Port-de-Bouc was machine-gunned, with graffiti proclaiming “dock workers = traitors to the fatherland.” In fact, the PCF and CGT leaders *supported* the blockade/embargo of Iraq, and arranged for the war matériel to be shipped from the military port of Toulon. But the French dockers’ courageous action shows that workers mobilization against imperialist war is possible.

The fight for mobilizing workers power against imperialist attack goes back to the founding of the Communist International. During the Rif War in the early 1920s, in which the French colonialists brutally put down insurgents in Morocco,

## Resolution for Workers Action Against Imperialist Aggression Against Iraq!

*The following resolution is being presented to workers organizations in Brazil by the Class-Struggle Caucus, initiated by our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil.*

WHEREAS, the workers of the entire world must unite their actions and class struggles against the exploiters under the great principle of proletarian internationalism; and

WHEREAS, imperialism and the bourgeoisie of the entire world, including Brazil and its partners in the Mercosul [South American common market], are trying to destroy all gains of the working class and the oppressed following capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union and in the context of growing inter-imperialist rivalries; and

WHEREAS, imperialism carried out an enormous massacre against the Iraqi people in 1991, followed up by a blockade which has killed hundreds of thousands of men, women and especially children in Iraq; and now the Yankee imperialists in particular are preparing another attack and another massacre in order to assert their control of oil, to demonstrate their power against their imperialist rivals and in order to save Clinton from his political crisis;

WHEREAS, the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso has instituted the starvation plans of the imperialist IMF [International Monetary Fund], carrying out “privatizations” in order to hand over industries and resources to the big national businessmen and their partners, the imperialist banks, attacking public-sector workers, sending in the army to smash the oil workers strike, sending the police—the armed fist of the bosses—against port workers in Santos to destroy their rights and unions, massacring landless peasants, gouging wages and carrying out mass layoffs against the metal workers of Volkswagen, increasing racism and all forms of oppression together with the other regional bourgeoisies of the Mercosul; and

WHEREAS, it is a duty and life-or-death question for the working class to oppose imperialism and defend the semi-colonial victims of imperialist oppression and aggression; and only the working class can carry out a genuine struggle against imperialism and all capitalist exploitation in total independence from the bourgeoisie and the oppressors (whether Fernando Henrique Cardoso or Saddam Hussein); and therefore the working class has the duty to **DEFEND IRAQ AGAINST IMPERIALIST ATTACK;**

WE RESOLVE, that Brazilian workers must organize workers actions against any imperialist attack on Iraq: protests, strikes and labor boycotts of any war matériel for the imperialist army; and we call on our class brothers and sisters in Argentina to carry out a labor boycott against the scandalous material support by the Menem government to imperialist aggression; and we call on our brothers and sisters, the workers of the United States, to use their class power against imperialist aggression. This position must not only be taken by the CUT [labor federation] and all the unions, but must be carried out in concrete form in the different sectors.

the Communist Party of France mobilized dock workers to boycott war matériel. But with the advent of the popular front in the 1930s, the PCF went over to the defense of French imperialism. Today, France's rulers—both the conservative president Chirac and the popular-front cabinet under “Socialist” premier Jospin—differ with Washington over bombing Iraq mainly because they want to grab trade deals with Baghdad when the sanctions are lifted. This inter-imperialist rivalry will not stop them from approving military action if Clinton really turns the screws. Yet in response to the recent war escalation, the LCR (Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire) of Alain Krivine published an article under the title “The Roots of the Crime” (*Rouge*, 20 February) in which it denounces the U.S. war mongers but says *not a word* against French imperialism and its “socialist/communist” administrators. It's not surprising that a large majority of the LCR members want to drop both the words “communist” and “revolutionary” from their name, for certainly they are neither.

In the U.S., as at the time of the 1990-91 Desert Slaughter, most of the left is desperately seeking Democratic doves to ally with. So far they have Ramsey Clark, the perennial bourgeois ally of the reformist Workers World Party (WWP) of the late Sam Marcy. The latest issue of *Workers World* (26 February) argues in its lead article that: “The U.S. government has no legal authority to launch an attack on Iraq. Read the Constitution. The president—and certainly the Joint Chiefs of Staff—cannot declare a war.” These Constitutional cretins go on to argue that there is no UN mandate either. Such “legal” niceties never stopped U.S. rulers in the past, nor will they now. By making such appeals to bourgeois legality, the perennial popular-frontists of WWP only aid the war-mongers by encouraging them to put a “democratic” cover on their slaughter, as they did in '91. Meanwhile, the National Emergency Coalition to Stop the War Against Iraq, whose sponsors include the WWP and various allied groups, called for a national march and rally under the slogan “Don't Bomb Iraq!” So instead the U.S. should continue the economic blockade, military inspections, no-fly zones and the rest of the imperialist strangulation? And now that the bombing is temporarily postponed?! We say: *U.S./UN hands off Iraq!*

The National Emergency Coalition is a classical antiwar popular front, such as the NPAC (National Peace Action Coalition, led by the SWP) and the PCPJ (People's Coalition for Peace and Justice, led by the Communist Party) at the time of the Vietnam War. Appealing for the support of imperialist liberals, they refused to take sides with the victims of imperialist attack, while attempting to exclude and even using physical violence against revolutionaries. Today, the same line is taken by all the reformists, from WWP to the moribund CP to the social-democratic International Socialist Organization, who seek to silence those who call for defense of Iraq and oppose the Democrats.

There should be no mistake about what a new imperialist war on Iraq would entail. In 1990-91, the death toll was well over 100,000 from the bombing and battlefield attacks. For all of the hoopla about “smart bombs,” a General Accounting

Office study last December reported that at least 40 percent missed their targets entirely. Of eleven strategic sites attacked by F-117 “stealth” bombers, only two were destroyed. One of the sites that *was* destroyed was an air raid shelter, in which more than 200 people were incinerated. Another was a baby food factory. It is now admitted that the U.S. was attempting to assassinate Saddam Hussein by bombing every building where they thought he might be, just as they tried against Libyan strongman Qaddafi in 1986. The rest of the munitions, along with more bomb tonnage than was dropped on Germany in World War II, caused “collateral damage.”

At a speak-out at Harvard University against the threatened U.S. attack on Iraq, a supporter of the Internationalist Group declared:

“In 1991, Desert Slaughter killed thousands of Iraqi men, women and children, and the U.S./UN-sponsored sanctions since then have led to the deaths of over half a million Iraqi children. Now the capitalist bosses and their politicians are gearing up for more death. U.S. imperialism is the biggest butcher and terrorist in the world. This is a period of inter-imperialist rivalry, of the division and red division of the world for profits, and it will lead to another world war if not stopped by the world's workers led by revolutionary vanguard parties.

“This is business as usual for Democrats and Republicans abroad, but what's their program for working people, for black and Hispanic people, for women, for gays and lesbians, for all the oppressed here in this country? Just ask Abner Louima, the Haitian immigrant savagely brutalized last year by racist Brooklyn cops. Just ask the thousands of victims of the racist slave-labor, union-busting ‘workfare’ schemes. Just ask all the immigrants under constant, murderous attack along the militarized U.S. borders. Just ask the entire generation of minority youth criminalized by the racist, phony ‘war on drugs’ and ‘war on crime.’ Where is the enemy? The enemy is here at home! The enemy is the two-headed ‘Republican’ party of the bosses, and any talk of the Democrats as a ‘lesser evil’ is a cynical lie....

“The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union was a terrible blow for the international working class, but capitalism itself is unstable and crisis-ridden, and the struggles of workers and the oppressed, from France to Mexico, from South Africa to Algeria to Indonesia, from the Palestinians under Zionist oppression in the occupied territories to the Kurds in Turkey and Iraq—all of these struggles cry out for the program of revolutionary proletarian internationalism! We say: Down with the sheiks, mullahs, emirs, kings, colonels and Zionist rulers! For revolutionary workers parties in the Near East and everywhere! Iraq needs a revolutionary workers party to lead the workers and peasants to overthrow the butcher Saddam Hussein and his Ba'athist regime.

“The only thing that will stop imperialism's inevitable drive to war are multiracial revolutionary workers parties organized in a reformed Fourth International with a Leninist-Trotskyist program. This is the crisis of revolutionary leadership that we face today, and that the Internationalist Group in the U.S. and Mexico, along with our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil in Brazil and of the Permanent Revolution Faction in France seek to resolve.” ■

## ICL Now Says No Popular Front in Mexico

# So How About El Salvador?

For nearly a decade, from 1988 to 1997, the International Communist League warned that an opposition "popular front" had been built in Mexico around Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. The purpose of this class-collaborationist coalition was to chain the restive working class as well as the mass of the oppressed to Cárdenas' bourgeois-nationalist PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution). Then, suddenly, on the eve of Cárdenas' election as governor of Mexico's capital, the ICL dropped any mention of this long-standing Spartacist position. When a leaflet by the Internationalist Group/Grupo Internacionalista challenged the Grupo Espartaquista de México about this "omission," the ICL denied the existence of a popular front in Mexico. Why? Because, unlike West Europe but "as in many semi-colonial countries, Mexico has not seen the development of even a reformist mass party of the working class." Instead, the ICL argued, the "trade union movement [is] directly tied to bourgeois nationalism" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 672, 8 August 1997).

In *The Internationalist* No. 3 (September-October 1997), our article on "Mexico: Cárdenas Popular Front Chains Workers to Capitalism" pointed out that the ICL's new line would deny the existence of popular fronts in many semi-colonial countries, as well as in the United States. Yet, we noted, in the early 1970s, the Spartacist League had repeatedly denounced the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC) created by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) as a *popular front*. When we raised this point in arguments with SL/ICL leaders, we were told that NPAC was "popular-frontist" and *not* a popular front as such. This is no small matter, particularly as the core of Spartacist cadre today were recruited in struggle against the SWP's popular-front policies in protests against the Vietnam War. In response, we published a polemic, "So How About the NPAC Popular Front?" (*The Internationalist* No. 4, January-February 1998).

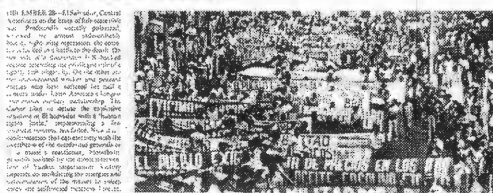
In verbal exchanges in the following weeks SL leaders were all over the map on this, some saying that NPAC was only popular-frontist while three feet away one of their comrades was insisting that "of course" it was a popular front. Now it's official: *Workers Vanguard* (No. 687, 27 March) has declared that NPAC was indeed a popular front. Yet the article reiterates that in Mexico, there is no popular front nor can there be "in the absence of a mass reformist workers party." The editors hope their readers won't notice the contradiction that, according to *WV*, no mass workers party = no popular front in Mexico, yet they admit there was a popular front in the U.S. in the absence of such a party. Meanwhile, the article again makes the truly bizarre syllogism that the Internationalist Group denounces a Cárdenas popular front in Mexico in order to capitulate to the popular front (which supposedly doesn't exist).

The article even runs a photo of an IG sign at a demo in solidarity with the victims of the Chenalhó massacre (at right) which says in Spanish, "Break with the Popular Front! Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!" This, according to the *WV* caption, is supposedly "deep-sixing opposition to bourgeois-nationalist PRD of Cárdenas." The charge is ludicrous to begin with, not to mention the fact that at the same demo we sold 50

## WORKERS VANGUARD

Popular Frontism Disarms Masses Before White Terror

## For Workers Revolution in El Salvador!



Now SL attacks IG for saying  
"Break with the Popular Front!"

## WORKERS VANGUARD

No. 687, 28 March 1998



Young Spartacus

No PRD in this picture: IG calls to "Break with the Popular Front!" at NYC Mexico protest, deep-sixing opposition to bourgeois-nationalist PRD of Cárdenas.

copies of a Spanish-language article on the Chenalhó massacre with the front-page slogan, "Cárdenas Popular Front Ties Workers to Capitalism," and that this article (printed in English in our last issue) denounces the bourgeois-nationalist PRD numerous times. *WV*'s absurd "polemic" is the response of someone grasping at straws.

What's really going on here is that the ICL is denying the existence of a popular front in Mexico because it refuses to struggle to break the workers and oppressed from that class-collaborationist coalition. It pretends that nothing has changed from the previous seven decades of semi-bonapartist rule by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), that one can simply denounce the subordination of the workers to bourgeois nationalism through the corporatist "unions" and be done with it. Yet hundreds of thousands march in Mexico City on May Day and other occasions against the PRI and its corporatist "unions." The Cárdenas popular front was set up to divert the seething discontent among the workers and rural and urban poor.

But while *WV* admits that NPAC was a popular front, this just increases the mass of contradictions in the ICL's new line. If no mass workers party = no popular front in Mexico, then what about El Salvador? During the 1980s civil war, the Spartacist tendency repeatedly and correctly warned that the popular-front coalition, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), threatened the insurgent worker and peasant masses by tying them to minor bourgeois parties. The very first article on El Salvador was headlined: "Popular Frontism Disarms Masses Before White Terror: For Workers Revolution in El Salvador!" (*WV* No. 271, 2 January 1981). An article calling to build the SL-initiated Anti-Imperialist Contingent in the 3 May 1981 march in Washington, D.C. showed a Spartacist banner declaring: "Military Victory to the Left-Wing Insurgents! Break with the Popular Front! For Workers Revolution in El Salvador! Defend the Soviet Union!" (see *WV* No. 278, 10 April 1981).

Of course, by the ICL's new logic, the SL must have been capitulating to the Salvadoran popular front, because it called for breaking from it without mentioning the FDR's initials!

A front-page article in *WV* (No. 276, 13 March 1981) explained that:

"The Salvadoran left has been influenced by decades of nationalist and Stalinist-reformist ideology so that its efforts have mainly been directed at papering over the very deep abyss between the classes there. That's what their whole popular-frontism policy is about. In the name of 'democratic unity' they get the workers and peasants committed to respecting the private property of the capitalists, the 'integrity' of the armed forces, the 'serene guidance' of the church, and so forth."

Perhaps this will be dismissed because this was from a forum by Jan Norden, then editor of *Workers Vanguard*, who was one of the leading cadres expelled by the SL in mid-1996. But let's look at another speech by an SL spokesman, this one by Reuben Samuels, on the front page of *WV* No. 305 (14 May 1982). Under the subhead "Popular Front Chains the Workers," Samuels explains:

"The whole history, from Spain to Chile to El Salvador, [has been] to find a shadow of the bourgeoisie and use it as an excuse not to make any encroachments on private property, on capital in any way....

"The popular front chains, openly chains, the working class and the parties of the working class to the imperialist bourgeoisie. And the popular front is not just an electoral, or even principally an electoral policy. You see, in the United States the Communist Party was confronted with the following dilemma: there was no mass party of the working class to offer up its mass support for a few parliamentary portfolios.... The welding of the mass industrial workers movement in this country by the social democrats and the Stalinists to the Democratic Party became the American version of the popular front."

For months, *WV* has referred to "the IG's insistence on the supposed existence of a 'popular front' around the PRD," pretending this was some peculiar position invented by the "defectors" (who were actually expelled), in order to hide the fact that the ICL had changed its line. *WV* talked of "clarifying" and "sharpening" its propaganda. Now it admits to having "corrected" the ICL's previous characterization. But "correcting" correct verdicts only produces false ones. As the above quotes make clear, the SL is junking one of the main axes of its propaganda during the Salvadoran civil war, a key front of the struggle against imperialism's anti-Soviet war drive in the 1980s. And this was no mere "analytical" matter without programmatic consequences. On several occasions, CISPES (the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador) and various reformist outfits like the Marcyite Workers World Party attempted to physically exclude the SL, even launching goon attacks, incensed over our warnings about the popular-front FDR.

From NPAC to El Salvador, the reformists have drawn a blood line to defend their popular front coalitions against communists. When the Trotskyists call these blocs with the bourgeoisie by their right name, for the class collaborators these are *fighting words*. Various centrists, meanwhile, try to muddy the waters. Thus in a polemic against the Revolutionary Workers League in the U.S., *WV* (No. 287, 14 August 1981) pointed to the contradiction between the RWL's "abstract leftism and concrete opportunism," as expressed in a statement by the Ann Arbor-based group which "recognizes that there are 'bourgeois elements' in the [Salvadoran] FDR opposition coalition, but doesn't mention the word popular front or call for workers to break from it." Sound familiar? Today the ICL has gone over to this centrist methodology, and not just in El Salvador.

## What About Bolivia?

Bolivia is one of the countries of Latin America best known for its militant working class. The ostensibly Trotskyist POR (Revolutionary Workers Party) of Guillermo Lora had influence among the combative tin miners. Yet although there has never been a mass workers party in Bolivia, the working class was chained to the capitalists at every crisis through popular fronts subordinating the unions and miners' militias to various bourgeois forces. Thus the 1952 revolution was contained



**WORKERS VANGUARD** No. 330, 30 May 1983**For Workers' Soviets to Smash the Gangster Military!****Bolivian Labor Shakes Popular Front**

within the bounds of capitalism through the alliance of the COB labor federation led by Juan Lechin with the bourgeois MNR (Revolutionary Nationalist Movement) of Víctor Paz Estenssoro. This story of class-collaborationist alliances was repeated in 1970-71, and again a decade and a half later.

In mid-1983, the COB and the miners entered into open conflict with the Popular Democratic Unity (UDP) coalition government. *Workers Vanguard* (No. 330, 30 May 1983) headlined: "Bolivian Labor Shakes Popular Front," and called "For Workers Soviets to Smash the Gangster Military!" A subhead declared "Popular Front Means Workers Blood"; a caption read: "Workers Must Break with Popular Frontism." In a new crisis the next year, *WV* (No. 349, 2 March 1984) headlined: "End of the Road for Bolivian Popular Front," and called for: "Workers to Power: For Workers' Militias and Soviets!" The extensive article on "Revolution and Counterrevolution in Bolivia" in *Spartacist* No. 40 (Summer 1987) summed up this experience:

"For the past 40 years, the history of Bolivia has been a cycle of military coups and 'popular fronts,' tying the workers and peasants to a phantom 'national' bourgeoisie. By dissipating the prerevolutionary crisis in March 1985, which brought the popular-front UDP of Hernán Siles to its knees, the way was opened for the victory of the Yankee imperialists' program of 'democratic counterrevolution.'... [In 1971, Lora] formed his own popular front, the Frente Revolucionario Antiimperialista (FRA), together with Torres, nationalist officers, Lechin, the PCB [the small Stalinist Communist Party], etc."

Guillermo Lora, in his diatribe against "The Cockatoos of *Workers Vanguard*" (1 September 1985, reproduced in *Spartacist* [edición en español] No. 18, October 1986), declared that his front was "qualitatively different from the popular front." According to the logic of the "new *WV*," the FRA couldn't be a popular front because of the absence of a mass workers party. Will it then say that Lora was right? The League for the Fourth International says this so-called "anti-imperialist united front" is but a Latin American version of the popular front, just like NPAC—and similar "antiwar" fronts in the 1930s—were a U.S. version of the popular front.

So *WV*'s "correction" of line simply poses more questions.

After saying in effect that the ICL propaganda misled Mexican workers for almost a decade in warning of a Cárdenas popular front, will the ICL now say that it also misled the Salvadoran workers and peasants for almost a decade in the midst of a civil war by calling to break with the FDR popular front? Will the ICL now say that it repeatedly misled the Bolivian workers including during sharp pre-revolutionary crises? If not, will *WV* claim there were mass workers parties in El Salvador and Bolivia? The membership of the Communist parties in these countries numbered in the hundreds. Moreover, the existence of popular fronts in semi-colonial countries of Latin America is not something that just appeared in the pages of *Workers Vanguard* in the 1970s. A *Spartacist* special supplement in May 1965, "Hands Off the Dominican Revolution!" denouncing the U.S. invasion of Santo Domingo, wrote of the rebellion that took place in the name of bourgeois nationalist Juan Bosch:

"The absence of a truly revolutionary Dominican party to guide the working class and lead the revolution has resulted in confusion among the rebelling masses. The old-line leaders have done their best to abort the revolution and negotiate a 'truce' with imperialism. The swearing-in of Boschite military leader Caamaño as 'President' has been due in good part to the efforts of these leaders to channel the masses back into a 'popular front' with the ruling class."

If the ICL now holds that it was wrong to refer to popular fronts in Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Mexico, will it explain why one standard applies in the U.S. and another in semi-colonial countries like Mexico and El Salvador? And what about Argentina, a country in an intermediate relation to imperialism, whose large organized workers movement has been directly subordinated to the bourgeoisie by Peronist nationalism? In Argentina, as well, the Spartacist tendency and ICL have written of popular fronts in the absence of a mass workers party. Will there be more "clarifying," "sharpening" and "correcting" of the line there, too?

## What About Indonesia? And South Korea?

Nor is this phenomenon limited to Latin America, nor to the past. In Indonesia, the Suharto dictatorship was hit by an upsurge of working-class unrest and popular protest in mid-1996. Prominent in the strike struggles were the outlawed SSBI and PPBI union federations, the latter linked to the left-populist People's Democratic Party (PRD). The PRD, in turn, played a key role in subordinating this movement to the bourgeois-nationalist opposition led by Megawati, the daughter of former Indonesian nationalist president Sukarno, who was overthrown in the 1965 Suharto coup, in which a million Communists were slaughtered. There is nothing remotely like a mass workers party in Indonesia today, yet an article on "Indonesia Powder Keg" in *WV* No. 654 (25 October 1996), prominently declared in a headline: "Remember 1965 Blood-bath—No More Popular Front Betrayals!"

But that was before the Mexico clarification/sharpening/

*continued on page 74*

## “Resonance” vs. Revolutionary Struggle

# SL Rejects Calls for Labor Strikes Against Imperialist War Moves

According to *Workers Vanguard* (No. 687, 27 March), a sign of the Internationalist Group at a Mexico protest calling to “Break with the Popular Front! Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!” is “deep-sixing opposition to bourgeois-nationalist PRD of Cárdenas.” Of a piece with this sophistry is *WV*’s hue and cry in the same article about the call made by our Brazilian comrades for international workers action against the imperialist war moves against Iraq. A motion by the Class-Struggle Caucus (CLC) was printed together with the 27 February IG statement on the Persian Gulf war moves, “Defend Iraq Against U.S. Imperialist Attack” (see page 63).

According to the ICL, the CLC motion supposedly shows our “touching faith in the ‘anti-imperialist’ credentials of the Latin American bourgeoisies and promotes illusions in a class-collaborationist ‘anti-imperialist united front’ with bourgeois nationalists.” How is that? Because, “while denouncing ‘Yankee imperialists,’” the CLC resolution “call[s] on our class brothers and sisters in Argentina to carry out a labor boycott against the scandalous material support by the Menem government to imperialist aggression.” Evidently, what *WV* finds scandalous is “denouncing ‘Yankee imperialists,’” but *not* Menem sending materiel to aid Uncle Sam in killing Iraqis.

As has become its norm of late, *WV* simply lies about the IG’s propaganda. It claims that our call for a revolutionary workers party “on the front page of its statement and in signs carried at protests was conspicuously *not* linked to the need to break workers and minorities from the capitalist Democrats.” Yet Internationalist Group signs conspicuously declared “Democrats/Republicans Murder Iraqis, Starve Welfare Moms & Kids,” and far from showing “appetites to tail after liberal/reformist ‘antiwar movements,’” as *WV* claims, the IG statement repeatedly said that “most of the left is desperately seeking Democratic doves to ally with,” that the protests were organized by “a classical antiwar popular front,” etc.

As for *WV*’s new criteria, counterposing the call for socialist revolution to “phony agitation for trade-union actions—like the boycott of military shipments,” we encourage SLers to take a look at the *Spartacist* July 1971 supplement, “Against NPAC Pop Fronts: For Class Action Against the War,” which (like the Internationalist Group leaflet on the Persian Gulf war moves) called for a revolutionary workers party, for labor strikes against the war, no popular fronts, for defeat of U.S. imperialism. Or try applying the SL’s new checklist to *most* of the leaflets and articles on the Vietnam War included in the first bound volume of *Spartacist*.

We might note that there was nothing in the Spartacist League statement on Washington’s war moves against Iraq (*WV* No. 685, 27 February) calling for defense of China, North

Korea or Cuba—a notable absence in an extensive declaration about U.S. war threats. Nor did SL signs in previous demonstrations from November to late February call for military defense of Iraq. In fact, their signs were indistinguishable from those of the reformist Workers World and SWP. We asked why there was no sign defending Iraq and were told that they didn’t find one around the office. Quite possibly true, we figured.

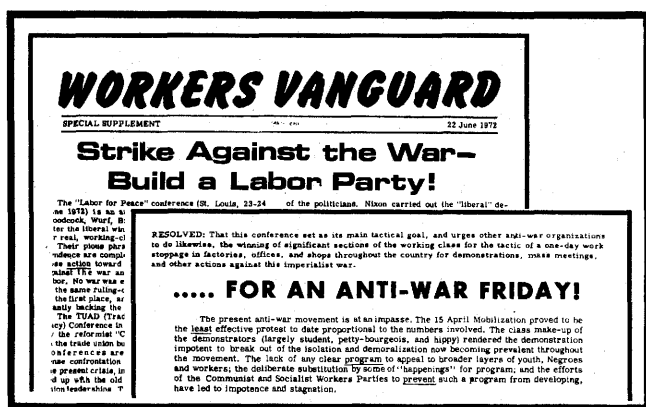
Unlike the ICL today, our method is not puerile point-scoring and inventing straw men to knock down. We prefer to discuss the real politics of those we polemicize with, and here there is a glaring omission in the SL statement: nowhere does it call for workers action against the imperialist war build-up. Nor is this accidental: challenged by the Internationalist Group, Spartacist spokesman stated that they deliberately did *not* call for workers strikes over the imperialist war measures against Iraq. Even more interesting is the SL’s explanation for why they aren’t raising such demands today.

At a March 28 Spartacist forum in New York City, an IG member noted that *WV*’s hullabaloo over the word “scandalous” was to divert attention from the next sentence in the CLC statement, in which our Brazilian comrades called “on our brothers and sisters, the workers of the United States, to use their class power against imperialist aggression.” He asked whether ICL supporters in the trade unions had fought for this, and if so how? ICL international secretary Parks responded by saying that the party’s trade-union fractions had been decimated in the late 1970s mass layoffs in auto, steel and other industries. True, but *hardly* an explanation, since sitting in the audience were supporters of the SL in two different public transport unions.

The second “argument” was to demand where the CLC motion had been *passed*, as if this were the criterion for whether revolutionaries raise particular demands. Another SL spokesman, a member of the central committee and *WV* editorial board, said that if the Persian Gulf War of 1990-91 had gone on a little longer, the call for labor strikes against the war might have had some “resonance” among U.S. workers. Again, this was a rather strange argument, since the Spartacist League did repeatedly call, for example in the SL statement “Defeat U.S. Imperialism! Defend Iraq!” (15 January 1991), “*For labor political strikes against the war!*”

Outside the New York forum another long-time SL cadre argued that *Spartacist* had not called for labor strikes against the Vietnam War at first, because it would not have had “resonance” then. IG members responded that it would have been perfectly correct to call for labor strikes against the Vietnam War in 1965.

These were clearly not chance remarks, but a political line: the SL was not calling for labor action against Washington’s lat-



est war moves. So when the forum was given again in Boston on March 30, in the discussion period an IG speaker attacked the SL's new policy, saying: "What is this 'resonance'? It is bowing down before the accomplished fact. The ICL [International Communist League] abstains from concrete struggle against U.S. imperialism's social-patriotic trade-union bureaucracy."

A Spartacus Youth Club supporter responded that "you couldn't call for labor strikes against the war" as the U.S. went up to the brink of war with Iraq. Why? Because, "if you talk to the workers, most of them supported the bombing." The Spartacist speaker at the forum, Joseph Seymour, went on:

"Why just limit yourself to something piddling like labor strikes against the war? Why don't you call for insurrection now? After all, what would a labor strike against the war be? A more or less effective protest. That's not a defeat for U.S. imperialism.

"We don't call upon workers to do stuff where they'll say 'you're crazy.' When we call for things we're serious about it."

The SL's national organizational secretary, also present at the Boston meeting, raised the same objection: "When you raise these demands, you have to be serious." Over the Vietnam War, Seymour argued, the SL didn't call for labor strikes until 1967, when the mood in the U.S. army was mutinous and the ghettos were aflame with unrest. To call for labor strikes today would be "adventurist" and would "discredit" revolutionaries.

What does it mean to say that it is wrong to call for concrete workers action against imperialist war moves because this would not have "resonance"? It means that the workers don't want to hear it, so the SL won't say it. This is the classic argument for opportunism: tailing after the existing consciousness of the workers, which is bourgeois consciousness. In this case, it's even worse, because the SL is tailing its own defeatist caricature of that consciousness. It's not true that American workers in 1998 were all for bombing Iraq. In fact, the Clinton administration was having a hard time convincing anyone, from imperialist allies to the U.S. population, to back its plans to bomb Iraq.

Today, poll after poll shows that three-quarters of the American population doesn't trust "their" government. It's called the "Vietnam syndrome," and more than 20 years after the end of that losing imperialist war, U.S. rulers still haven't been able to kick it. As Clinton's threats to unleash massive bombing against Iraq escalated, there was rapidly mounting opposition in the United States. And elsewhere in the world, the U.S. threats to rain death on Iraq were hardly popular.

It is also not true that calls early on for labor political strikes against the Vietnam War would not have found "resonance" in sections of the working class. Already by late 1965, there was considerable sentiment against the war in the United Auto Workers; in Chicago, protests against the war were organized out of the union hall of the Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen; and on the West Coast, a delegation from the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) Local 34 participated in the 20 October 1965 Vietnam Day march in Oakland.

Nor is it true, as *WV* No. 687 claims, that "In fact, the SWP was not able to consummate a popular front with bourgeois politicians like [Indiana senator Vance] Hartke in 1965, because at that point no significant bourgeois politician opposed the war." In fact, already by that time significant sectors of the U.S. ruling class were worried about getting "bogged down" in Vietnam. Following the February 1965 U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, Oregon Senator Wayne Morse came out against the war, as was noted in 17 April 1965 Spartacist "Statement on Vietnam" (included in the first bound volume of *Spartacist*). Shortly after, Alaska senator Ernest Gruening began speaking at anti-war protests.

No SWP-brokered popular front in 1965, says the Spartacist League in 1998? Here's what the SL wrote three decades ago: "The first major test of how far the SWP-YSA was willing to go to implement their 'pop-front' strategy came during the NYC preparations for the October 1965 International Days of Protest.... To further strengthen its 'pop front,' the SWP began wooing the Stalinists in debates across the country" (see "Anti-War Sellout" in *Spartacist* No. 10, May-June 1967). But this is not an arcane debate about dates, it is about *program*. *WV*'s ham-handed attempts at historical falsification are intended to justify the SL's new line of abstaining from the struggle to mobilize the workers in action against the war moves of "its own" bourgeoisie.

As Trotsky noted in discussions on the 1938 Transitional Program, "The program must express the objective tasks of the working class rather than the backwardness of the workers." When Karl Liebknecht voted against war credits to the Kaiser's government in December 1914 and the Gruppe Internationale was founded by only four leaders of German social democracy—Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring and Clara Zetkin—their call did not immediately find "resonance" among the German workers, who were caught up in the war hysteria. The first antiwar demonstrations in Germany, in April 1915, consisted of a few hundred women gathered in front of the Reichstag. Yet workers' consciousness can develop rapidly under the impact of historic events.

When Liebknecht was tried before a court martial for his revolutionary opposition to the imperialist war on 28 June 1916, some 55,000 Berlin workers went out on strike. A second strike against the war took place in April 1917, influenced by the February Revolution in Russia, again drawing about 50,000 workers in the German capital. In February 1918, a mass anti-war strike broke out involving more than half a million workers in Berlin, lasting for an entire week, leaving six workers dead and thousands of strikers drafted. This did not end the

war, but it was hardly "piddling." In fact, it set off mounting opposition to the imperialist war and their example sparked growing anti-war sentiment among the troops and sailors, leading nine months later to the fall of the monarchy.

What is most significant about the SL's new line against calling for workers action against the war build-up in the Persian Gulf until the workers are ready to hear it is how it dovetails with their increasing abstentionism and their open revision of the fundamental thesis of the Transitional Program, that the crisis of humanity comes down to the crisis of revolutionary leadership. This is no longer "adequate," says the SL today, because of a supposed retrogression in the consciousness of the workers movement that is described as "qualitative," "historical" and "deep" (see "In Defense of the Transitional Program" on page 10 of this issue).

Now the SL argues that because the workers don't yet "resonate" to calls for labor action against imperialist war moves, *revolutionaries should not call for it*. This makes clear the profoundly rightist logic of the SL/ICL's new abstentionist course. *The abstentionism and revisionism of the SL/ICL lead straight to capitulation before "their own" bourgeoisie.*

Spartacist CC members argue in Boston against calling for labor strikes because you have to be "serious" about it. The ICL international secretary asks where the Brazilian CLC resolution was actually passed. And in a letter (7 November 1997) attacking the comrades who formed the Permanent Revolution Faction in France, Parks wrote: "When we do propose tactics we are *serious* about proposing things that actually have

a possibility of winning, and not posturing as the most militant windbags on the left" (see *Internationalist* special supplement, "Crisis in the ICL" [March 1998]).

In France, this argument was raised in rejecting a call to put out propaganda calling for extending the French truckers strike, for the formation of workers defense guards, for turning the strike into an open fight against the popular front Jospin government. Now the same argument is used to oppose calls for workers strikes against imperialist war moves. Add it up, and in the guise of "seriousness" you have a capitulation by the SL/ICL to the bourgeoisie and its labor lieutenants, from France to the U.S.

So for all the ICL's talk of "economism" in attacking the PRF, the IG and the Brazilian LQB, redefining this concept to mean any active participation to fight for a revolutionary program in economic struggles of the working class, this latest capitulation by the ICL leadership is the real thing. Its new line opposed to calling for labor strikes against war moves is a genuine application of economism, which determines tasks by measuring the workers' "moods" with the thermometer of tailism.

This worship of the accomplished (or invented) fact is then covered over with leftist verbiage, separating the fight to mobilize the proletariat against the imperialist war build-up today from the struggle for socialist revolution in the distant future. Lenin and Trotsky noted that for the pre-World War I Second International, socialist revolution (its "maximum program") had been reduced to a subject for empty "Sunday speechifying." For the SL/ICL today, on the road to "maximalist" social democracy, every day is Sunday. ■

## El Salvador...

*continued from page 71*

correction. The lead article on Indonesia in the latest *WV* (No. 688, 10 April) criticizes the PRD's "class-collaborationist strategy," it attacks the PRD's "calls for alliances with the two legal non-government parties," which are "simply the left wing of the existing capitalist order." But it doesn't say the words "popular front," except in reference to the situation prior to the 1965 coup, when there was the huge PKI (Communist Party) with over a million members. But that was then, it seems, and now warnings against the danger of the popular front are taboo.

Similarly in South Korea, at the time of the huge general strike of December 1996/January 1997, *Workers Vanguard* (No. 660, 24 January 1997) criticized the KCTU federation of non-government-controlled unions for its "bloc with bourgeois elements like Kim Dae Jung," then leader of the liberal opposition, adding that "such class-collaborationist alliances—popular fronts—have been a formula for working class defeat" from Spain in the 1930s to Chile in the '70s. The KCTU called off that strike in favor of a deal to be brokered by the bourgeois opposition parties. Now that opposition is in office, with President Kim Dae Jung implementing even more draconian IMF-ordered anti-union measures, and the unions are acquiescing. Post-"clarification," recent articles on South Korea in *WV* mention the KCTU's support for bourgeois "liberals," but the words

"popular front" do not appear.

The question of the popular front is not simply semantic or purely "analytical." Writing about Spain in the 1930s, Trotsky insisted that the attitude toward the popular front was "the best criterion for the difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism." But where did Trotsky insist that popular fronts were restricted to those cases where there is a mass workers party? Nowhere did he say this—just as he never argued that the existence of "feudal remnants" is a prerequisite for the program of permanent revolution to apply. These fake criteria are simply revisionist *inventions*.

In denying the existence of a popular front in Mexico—and ultimately in a whole series of countries, following out the logic of this change in line—the ICL denies the need to intervene to break the workers and oppressed from this class-collaborationist coalition. As *WV* portrays it, the working masses are totally dominated by bourgeois nationalism, and thus in the absence of a mass workers party, the ICL's task is simply to denounce the capitalist parties and be done with it—while keeping its hands out of the "boiling water" of the class struggle, to be sure. The ICL's revised vocabulary is an attempt to justify its increasingly abstentionist line.

The editors of *WV* must be lamenting: so many countries, so many back issues of *WV*, so much to "clarify." Indeed, they have a lot of explaining to do. Meanwhile, the League for the Fourth International stands on the Trotskyist program the ICL renounces. ■



## France: Racist State Terror...

*continued from page 80*

assassinated independence fighters in New Caledonia and participated in the bloody U.S.-led "Desert Slaughter" against Iraq. These same blood-soaked imperialists have regularly intervened to prop up client dictators in Central Africa, armed and trained the fascistic Hutu militias in Rwanda, kept supplying them as they unleashed the genocidal slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Tutsis—and then rescued the mass murderers under the guise of a "humanitarian" mission, Operation Turquoise.

The French bourgeoisie piously intones that the Papon trial should serve as a "history lesson" to a new generation. Perhaps, but not in the way they want. For this case vividly illustrates the brutal oppression meted out by *both* Vichy France and the bourgeois Republic, and *how they are directly connected* rather than counterposed. Papon was one of a whole layer of Nazi and collaborator officials whose services were taken over and used by the "democratic" imperialists in the anti-Soviet Cold War. In France, they played key roles in colonial and anti-Communist repression under the Fourth and Fifth Republics, under governments of the reactionary right *and the reformist left*.

The Papons of yesterday are politically reflected not only in the fascist National Front (FN) of Jean-Marie Le Pen and the "respectable" right-wingers whose hold on office depends on FN votes, but also in the parliamentary left. The Socialists (PS) led the war against Algerian independence in the '50s and their standard bearer for a quarter century, the late French president François Mitterrand, was a former Vichy official. The Communist Party (PCF) voted for the wars against Vietnamese and Algerian independence and regularly supported and even spearheaded anti-immigrant repression in France—recall the bulldozer attack by the PCF mayor of Vitry against an immigrant workers hostel in 1980.

The PS tries to use outrage over the Papon affair and over recent electoral successes by the FN to build support for the popular front government of the "plural left" under Socialist prime minister Lionel Jospin. Yet the brutal cop attacks on immigrants unleashed by Papon in the 1940s and '60s are today repeated in a racist police state of siege in the heavily immigrant working-class suburbs around France's major cities. Interior Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement departs thousands of undocumented immigrants, while the Jospin government passes the anti-immigrant Chevènement Law (with PCF deputies hiding behind the fig leaf of abstention). To get rid of all the Papons and their ilk will take nothing less than socialist revolution.

### "A French Career"

Maurice Papon attended the elite Louis le Grand secondary school in Paris, joined the Radical-Socialist Youth and began his steady rise in the bureaucratic ranks under the Popular Front government of 1936-38, working in the office of the prime minister. The Radicals were the main bourgeois party of the time, whose presence in the Popular Front served as a guarantee that the workers would be chained to capitalism. Under Stalin's orders the PCF initiated this class-collaborationist

coalition, which was then codified by the Stalinized Communist International in 1935.

While the Popular Front strangled the Spanish Revolution, its counterpart in France contained the revolutionary upsurge shown in the militant general strike following the 1936 elections. Once the wave of working-class militancy had passed and the masses' revolutionary energy was spent, Socialist premier minister Léon Blum was replaced by the Radical Edouard Daladier who in late 1938 put an end to the parliamentary "left" coalition and allied with the right. In September 1939, following Hitler's invasion of Poland, the parliament (including scores of Socialist deputies) voted full powers to the head of the French Army, Marshal Pétain. By heading off revolution, the Popular Front paved the way for counterrevolution.

When the Germans invaded France in 1940, they occupied the northern half of the country, leaving the southern half under the administration of Pétain, who set up his quisling regime in the resort city of Vichy. Papon worked in the interior ministry and then was promoted to deputy to the prefect of the département of the Gironde, centered on the Atlantic port of Bordeaux. In serving as an official of the Vichy dictatorship, Papon followed the same route as thousands of other government officials. (During this period, the future "socialist" president Mitterrand was in charge of veterans affairs for the Pétain regime, writing intelligence reports on the Resistance.)

In Bordeaux, Papon was assigned the task of organizing the rounding up and shipping Jews to the transit camps. Shortly after taking up his functions in June 1942, he signed an order: "I instruct the commander of the gendarmerie to carry out the arrest of these Jews and to transfer them to the camp at Mérignac, leaving it to me, once they have been rounded up in the camp, to order their departure for the Drancy camp" (*Le Monde*, 1 October 1997).

As a consummate bureaucratic opportunist, Papon closely watched which way the winds of war were blowing. After the German defeat at Stalingrad in 1943, he turned down a promotion that would have put him in an exposed position. Just prior to the Allied invasion of Normandy in June 1944, Papon adroitly took up contact with the Resistance. When the Vichy regime crumbled, he organized the handing over of power in Bordeaux...to himself. Thanks to the intervention of former high school friends working in the offices of General Charles de Gaulle, Papon became prefect of Bordeaux.

The fact that Papon, Mitterrand and thousands of other Vichy functionaries could effortlessly pass from the pro-Nazi dictatorship of General Pétain to the pro-Allied regime of General de Gaulle is a powerful statement of how fascism and bourgeois democracy are two variants of the capitalists' class rule. In fact, the Vichy bureaucracy was taken over wholesale into the Fourth Republic to counter the strength gained by the Communist Party in the Resistance. The same occurred with the government apparatus of fascist Italy, and with much of the state machinery of Nazi Germany (following "denazification" retraining courses).

Despite the "anti-fascist" trappings adopted by the supposedly "democratic" Allies against the German-dominated Axis, World War II was a conflict between two rival imperial-



**"17 October 1961: Blood on the Pavement"--Bodies of Algerians murdered by Paris police. Well over 200 were killed, many thrown into the Seine River, in worst cop massacre in France since World War II.**

ist camps. In this war, fought over the control of colonies, raw materials, markets and strategic domination, the interests of the workers and oppressed were opposed to both imperialist coalitions. At the same time, the international proletariat was duty-bound to defend the Soviet Union against imperialist attack, both from Hitler's Operation Barbarossa and later from the military and economic pressure of the Cold War.

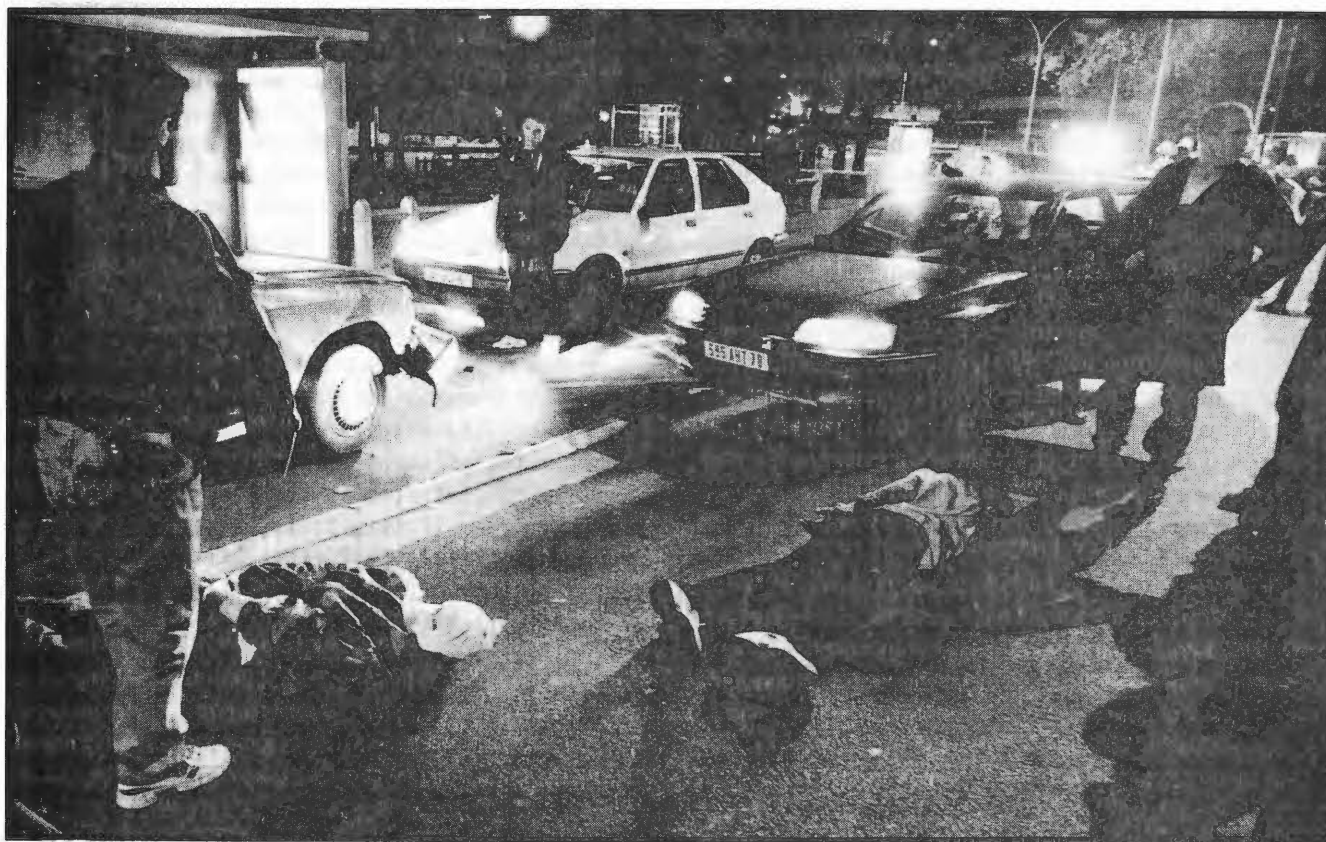
A vivid proof of the inter-imperialist character of the war was what happened in the colonies. When British troops rolled into Saigon, the capital of southern Vietnam, in May 1945, they immediately proceeded to put down a pro-independence uprising led by the Vietnamese Trotskyists, later turning power over to French colonial officials. (The British were aided in putting down the revolt by the Stalinists, who murdered the Trotskyist leaders.) In Algeria, on 8 May 1945, the very day the commanders of the German Wehrmacht surrendered in Berlin, the "Free French" colonialists staged a simultaneous massacre in Sétif, Guelma and Kherrata, killing 45,000 Algerians. In 1947, this pattern was repeated in the bloody repression of a pro-independence uprising in Madagascar in which an estimated 90,000 were killed.

That autumn, Maurice Papon was placed in charge of Algerian affairs in the ministry of the interior. In 1949, he became prefect in the Algerian city of Constantine, carrying out the policy of "pacification" by forced population transfers. In the mid-1950s, Papon returned to Constantine as the head of the administration of eastern Algeria—a virtual pro-consul. Under his authority, summary executions and police torture were the standard regimen.

### **Papon Orders October 1961 Paris Massacre**

The inability of the French army to suppress the Algerian war for independence led to endless government crises and ultimately the fall of the Fourth Republic in 1958 and the return to power of General de Gaulle. Shortly beforehand, Maurice Papon was named chief of police of the capital by the Socialist government. He was then confirmed in that position by de Gaulle, whose instructions were to "Hold Paris." Papon immediately began raids among the hundreds of thousands of Algerian refugees and workers in France, rounding up several thousand and holding them in places like the Velodrome d'Hiver sports arena. The "Vel d'Hiv" was infamous as the site where the head of the Vichy police in World War II, René Bousquet, held some 16,000 Jews rounded up in July 1942 raids. Then, in the fall of 1961, as the French government was negotiating with the National Liberation Front (FLN), putting the final touches on the Evian Accords which marked Algeria's passage from the status of a colony to a formally independent neo-colony of France, and as bomb attacks by the ultra-rightist OAS (Secret Army Organization) mounted, repression against Algerians in France reached a climax.

The hammer in this operation was Maurice Papon. On October 5, Papon ordered a night-time curfew for all "French Muslims from Algeria," or "MFAs" in the hated bureaucratic shorthand of the police. Three days earlier, the chief of police ordered his cops to shoot first in case of danger: "You will be covered, I give you my word. Moreover, when headquarters are alerted that a North African has been shot, the chief who arrives on the scene



Le Figaro Magazine

**1997: Youths rounded up by French police during raid on heavily North African working-class areas.**

will have everything necessary to see that the North African has a gun on him, because at this time we can't have any mistakes" (quoted in the powerful book by Jean-Luc Einaudi, *La bataille de Paris* [The Battle of Paris], 1991). From rounding up Jews under Pétain to rounding up Algerians under De Gaulle, Papon has always spoken with the frankness of an "untouchable" official who is confident that he is "covered" by the machinery of the capitalist state—as he has been, and still is. But the Algerian population of the French capital didn't bow to this diktat.

In response to a call by the FLN for a show of strength, on the evening of 17 October 1961 Algerians began gathering on the outskirts of Paris. Altogether, some 30,000 men, women and children joined in this protest in defiance of the curfew. The march was banned by the government, and Papon made extensive preparations for another of his mass roundups. The crowds marched peacefully until just before 10 p.m., chanting "For an Algerian Algeria," "FLN to power!" and "Free [FLN leader Ahmed] Ben Bella!" And then, suddenly, shots rang out and the police unleashed violent repression. Photos show men crouching with hands on their heads outside the Concorde metro station, buses stuffed with terrified Algerians being transported to holding pens, the Palais des Sports ringed with army trucks. Some 11,538 people were arrested that night, according to the statistics of the prefecture. In the improvised jails, beatings continued for days. There are numerous reports of "suspects" killed by torture during "interrogation."

In the streets the situation was even worse. As families emerged from the metro stations they were driven through a gauntlet of police bringing down riot sticks on their heads.

Other cops used their gun butts. Even among those who survived, many suffered cracked skulls. Others had their heads smashed and crushed under foot. Women were beaten bloody. Some were strangled by cords tied to police truncheons. Some of the most brutal beatings were by Algerian "auxiliary police" recruited by Papon, similar to the hated *harkis* in Algeria, mercenaries fighting on the side of the French army. Photos show several Algerians who had been shot to death, lying in pools of their blood on the pavement. But contrary to police claims of gunfire from "the FLN," no cops received gunshot wounds. The repression was unleashed on a defenseless crowd.

The most dramatic fate was suffered by the dozens of protesters—many of them already badly injured, some with their hands tied—who were thrown into the Seine to drown. Beginning in early September, bodies of North Africans arrested by the police were later found floating in the river. By the end of the month, cadavers were being fished out of the water at the rate of one a day. And then, on the night of October 17, the police unleashed an orgy of violence. For years, Papon only admitted to three dead. Newly opened government archives list more than 70 killed. But independent sources estimate that well over 200 (and possibly more than 300) Algerians were murdered by the cops.

Papon was able to prevent an official inquiry into the massacre. A few months later, on 8 February 1962, the Paris police brutally attacked a demonstration called by the PCF and CGT along with other left parties and unions protesting the bombings by the right-wing OAS terrorists. Riot cops drove the crowd against the locked gates of the Charonne metro station where eight demonstrators were trampled to death. In response,

the unions called a strike which shut down the country; 300,000 to 500,000 people lined the route of the funeral. *Le Monde* described Charonne as "the bloodiest confrontation between police and demonstrators since 1934." Already, the hundreds who died on 17 October 1961 were forgotten.

In 1965, the left-wing Moroccan opposition leader Mehdi Ben Barka was kidnapped by gangsters in Paris and murdered. When evidence showed police involvement, the outcry eventually led to Papon's resignation as police prefect. But this did not stop Papon's career. In 1967, de Gaulle named him head of the Sud-Aviation nationalized aircraft manufacturer. The next year, Sud-Aviation in Nantes was the first plant to go out on strike together with the students in the explosive May 1968 revolt. Following the defeat of the general strike, due to the treachery of the PCF, Papon was elected deputy in the "elections of fear." After a decade in parliament, he was named budget minister in the right-wing government of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Papon retired as a commander of the Legion of Honor, with a red rosette, awarded in 1961, for service to the Republic.

### **Mobilize the Working Class to Smash Racist Reaction!**

The massacre of 17 October 1961 occurred in the very heart of the capital of France, and yet for many years there was a curtain of silence over this official mass murder. The silence was enforced officially, and through unofficial self-censorship. A Belgian TV team filmed accounts by witnesses, but it was expelled from France, and its report was suppressed by company executives under pressure from Paris. In 1962, Armand Panigel shot a film, *Octobre en Paris*, but it was banned from distribution for 12 years. Paulette and Marcel Péju wrote a small book, *Ratonnades à Paris* (Raids in Paris) for the left-wing publisher François Maspéro. However, following independence in 1962 the leadership of the Algerian FLN opposed the publication of the book—presumably in order to smooth relations with the French government, of which it was now a client regime—and most of copies were seized by the Paris police. Twenty years after the events, a dossier was published in the Paris daily *Libération*, and a book by Michel Levine, *Les ratonnades d'octobre* (The October Raids), was published in 1985. But not until 1991 was there widespread reporting of the bloody massacre three decades earlier.

It was the duty of the workers movement not only to denounce the vicious colonialist repression, but also to mobilize actively against it and to defend the victims of the police massacre. But the Socialist and Communist parties, as reformists, are committed to the defense of French capitalism and thus no less wary about denouncing the crimes of French "democracy" than are the official "opinion makers." Today, the PCF pretends that it supported the struggle for Algerian independence, but in 1961 it was espousing the neo-colonialist line of de Gaulle after earlier supporting the dirty war of French colonialism! The government of Socialist prime minister Guy Mollet was installed in 1956 with Communist votes in parliament, and the PCF then voted for special powers to Mollet to intensify the war against Algerian independence fighters. Throughout, the PCF defended the colonial or neo-colonial empire of "its" bourgeoisie.

Following the October 1961 killings, the PCF Political Bureau issued a protest statement, but did not mobilize the working class in defense of the Algerians. Individual Communists were present at the October 17 demonstration. When this was pointed out in parliament by the government, Jean-Marie Le Pen, then a deputy of the rightist Poujade movement, cried out, "Arrest them!" But the Communist Party itself stood by and watched, literally looking out their windows at the brutal repression taking place below on the street. A photographer for the PCF's *L'Humanité* shot a photo from the balcony showing several dozen Algerians sitting in front of the Rex theater, surrounded by police (reproduced in Anne Tristan, *Le silence du fleuve* [The Silence of the River], 1991). The "Communist" journalists did nothing to aid these hapless victims of cop terror, and in fact slammed the gate on their building to those seeking refuge. The photographer Elie Kagan, who courageously went around Paris taking pictures of the horror, saw the scene as Algerians sought to escape the cop billy clubs:

"The police pursued them and beat them. On the boulevard, the Algerians were fleeing. Some tried to enter the *L'Humanité* building to seek refuge there. Elie Kagan reports that the gates were shut in front of them."

—Jean-Luc Einaudi, *La bataille de Paris*

This disgusting episode speaks loudly about the real policies of the PCF. Its parliamentary deputies raised polite questions in the National Assembly, and sat politely in hearings listening to Papon's cynical lies. *L'Humanité* published a long statement to the French working class two days later, calling on it to be "aware of the gravity of the situation" and of the "measures of a fascist character taken with regard to the Algerian workers." Yet the PCF did not mobilize for the October 17 demonstration against the racist Algerians-only curfew, nor did it call a central protest demonstration against the most murderous police massacre in France since the fall of the Vichy regime.

Today, *L'Humanité* (17 October 1997) reports that there were "work stoppages in several plants in the Paris region." There was a half-hour stoppage at the Renault plant at Boulogne-Billancourt the day after the massacre, and another protest on the 20th when Algerian women workers were arrested. But the PCF-led CGT labor federation did not generalize this willingness to fight into mass strike action against the racist police attack, which was clearly needed. Indeed, a few years later the CGT was still repeating the police lies that only two Algerians died in the massacre. And for decades the PCF commemorated the eight who were killed in the police attack on the Charonne demonstration, but was silent about the hundreds of Algerians murdered on 17 October 1961.

These issues are of immediate relevance today, as the French capitalist state escalates its repression against North African immigrants and "second-generation" youth in the immigrant neighborhoods and housing projects. During the Persian Gulf War of 1990-91, the Socialist government unleashed the "Vigipirate" dragnet of random army and police checks of anyone who "looks like" an immigrant for North Africa or sub-Saharan Africa. In the summer of 1995, at the time of mounting bombings attributed to Islamic fundamentalists, the right-wing regime of Chirac-Juppé resuscitated this racist repression, with the tolerance and



Dalmas/Sipa-press



**Over 7,000 Algerians were held in Palais des Sports following 17 October 1961 massacre by Paris police.**

even approval of the PCF and CGT.

The Vigipirate plan is the largest military and police deployment on French territory since the Algerian war of independence, and it is still in effect today. During the latest imperialist preparations to attack Iraq, there was a huge deployment of army troops and police officers in the subway and train stations of major French cities. Another wave of anti-immigrant repression is planned for the World Cup football (soccer) tournament in June.

In recent weeks, as the popular-front Jospin government has tried to put on a left face with demonstrations protesting the gains by the National Front in the regional elections, the reformist ex-far left dutifully tags along. Their main concern is to secure their respectability after receiving 4.3 percent of the vote, resulting in 20 seats in regional councils for Arlette Laguiller's Lutte Ouvrière (Workers Struggle) and 3 seats for the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire of Alain Krivine. The impotent electoral cretinism of these parties erroneously referred to as Trotskyist is a reflection of their political subordination to the class-collaborationist coalition of the "plural left."

Meanwhile, Interior Minister Chevènement has been thun-

dering about the danger of "British Trotskyists," as the GR/JRE (Revolutionary Left/Youth Against Racism in Europe), affiliated with Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party (ex-Militant Labour) in Britain has tried to get passengers at Charles de Gaulle airport in Roissy to refuse to embark on planes with deportees on board. The GR/JRE and other protesters must be defended against the foreigner-baiting and Trotskyist-baiting minister of order. But instead of appealing to the individual consciences of passengers, authentic Trotskyists seek to mobilize the power of the working class in united struggle to defend immigrant workers. Rather than calling for votes to the Communist Party, as the GR did in the last parliamentary elections, Trotskyists call for proletarian opposition to all the parties and candidates of the popular front.

The Groupe Internationaliste (formerly Permanent Revolution Faction), section of the League for the Fourth International, demands *full citizenship rights for everyone in France*. During the recent truckers strike, the PRF fought inside the Ligue Trotskyiste de France to present a program including calls for workers defense groups against fascist attacks, and for mobilizing the unions against attacks on immigrants. As Chevènement increases the deportations of *sans papiers* (immigrants without official residency papers), the GI calls for struggle to *mobilize the workers movement in action to stop the deportations*, and for *worker/immigrant mobilizations against racist and fascist terror*. Transportation, postal, RATP (metro) and other unions have the power to shut down Charles de Gaulle airport to block the deportation of foreigners. But to use this power requires above all a revolutionary leadership.

Acting as a "tribune of the people," championing the oppressed against every blow struck against them, a Trotskyist party must be built that can join together the "French" and "immigrant" workers in action against the common class enemy. This requires a systematic struggle to unmask the various "communist" and pseudo-Trotskyist reformists and centrists whose occasional Marxist airs and militant posturing only serve to cover up their real capitulation before the bourgeoisie.

The perpetrators of crimes against humanity such as Papon will never be brought to justice by the bourgeois state, for they are the enforcers of capitalist law and order. Real justice could only come from a tribunal composed of the different victims of these capitalist state crimes: deported Jews, worker militants persecuted by the Vichy police, North African independence fighters, Algerian immigrants who survived the slaughter of October 1961 and the killings at the Charonne metro station. Such justice can only come from the proletariat in power, which will avenge these victims.

The key lesson of 17 October 1961 was that absence of a Leninist-Trotskyist party meant that the Algerian protesters faced the terrible repression alone. The Groupe Internationaliste and the League for the Fourth International seek to build a revolutionary workers party to fight for international socialist revolution. Only this will put an end to racist cop raids—such as in June-July 1942, when Jews were rounded up for the Nazi death camps, as in October 1961, when the streets ran red with immigrant workers' blood, and in "Vigipirate" today. Then the Papons, Mitterrands and other capitalist rulers who ordered this butchery will be swept away forever. ■

**Papon Trial highlights Crimes of WWII Vichy Dictatorship**

# France: Racist State Terror From World War II to Today

**Workers Revolution Will Avenge the Victims of  
October 1961 Massacre of Algerians in Paris**

For six months, from October 1997 through March 1998, a court in Bordeaux, France was the scene of the trial of Maurice Papon, a former official of the World War II Hitler-allied Vichy regime who later became a high official in the post-war Republic. Papon was charged with crimes against humanity for his role in the rounding up of Jews, some 76,000 of whom were transported from France to the Nazi death camps. As sub-prefect (the number-two civilian official) in Bordeaux during 1942-45, Papon was in charge of "Jewish affairs" in the region for the right-wing dictatorship of Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain. His guilt was undeniable. On April 2, a jury convicted Papon of responsibility for the deportations, and sentenced him to ten years in jail. But as the chief judge read off the list of 768 charges against this bureaucrat who dispatched hundreds of Jewish men, women and children to their deaths, not once was he found guilty for their deaths. In effect, the court accepted Papon's cynical argument that he knew nothing of the Holocaust.

The pro-Socialist daily *Libération* (4 April) reported "near-unanimous" support for the verdict among the "political class"—i.e., the bourgeoisie and their reformist camp followers. The outcome is barely a slap on the wrist for this bureaucratic killer, and the most tokenistic reckoning with the monstrous crimes of Vichy France. At age 87, Papon will hardly serve any time in prison. Indeed, he has only been jailed for a brief two days, instead spending his time at his Paris home or his country estate, protected by elite government security forces.

Moreover, while this single middle-level (at the time) official was tried, there *thousands* of French bureaucrats who made the wheels of the Nazi murder machine turn. Klaus Barbie, the German SS Butcher of Lyon, was finally extradited from Bolivia and tried, but the French cops, interior min-



AFP/Derrick Geyrac

**Protesters in April 1997 outside court building in Bordeaux demonstrating against former Vichy official (and later cabinet member) Papon, who rounded up Jews for transport to Auschwitz via concentration camp in Drancy, France.**

istry officials, judges and other perpetrators and accomplices have escaped with impunity. Mainly the Papon trial served the present rulers of France as a vehicle to extol "Republican values" against Pétain's *état français* (French state), and to hide the crimes of the "democratic" French Republic.

Maurice Papon was a vicious cop administrator under both capitalist regimes—Vichy and the Republic. The same man who in the 1940s sent more than 1,700 Jews to the transit camp at Drancy, a stop on the way to Auschwitz and other extermination camps, two decades later was the chief of police in Paris who ordered the mass arrest of over 10,000 Algerian "foreigners" and unleashed the cops in a murderous frenzy on the night of 16 October 1961. In the space of three days, bloodthirsty police killed over 200 immigrants, shooting some, crushing the skulls of others, throwing corpses and scores of injured victims into the Seine River where many drowned.

Papon was an enforcer for the French ruling class, the same class that in this period carried out massacres of its colonial subjects in "dirty wars" from Vietnam to Algeria. In the 1990s it

*continued on page 75*